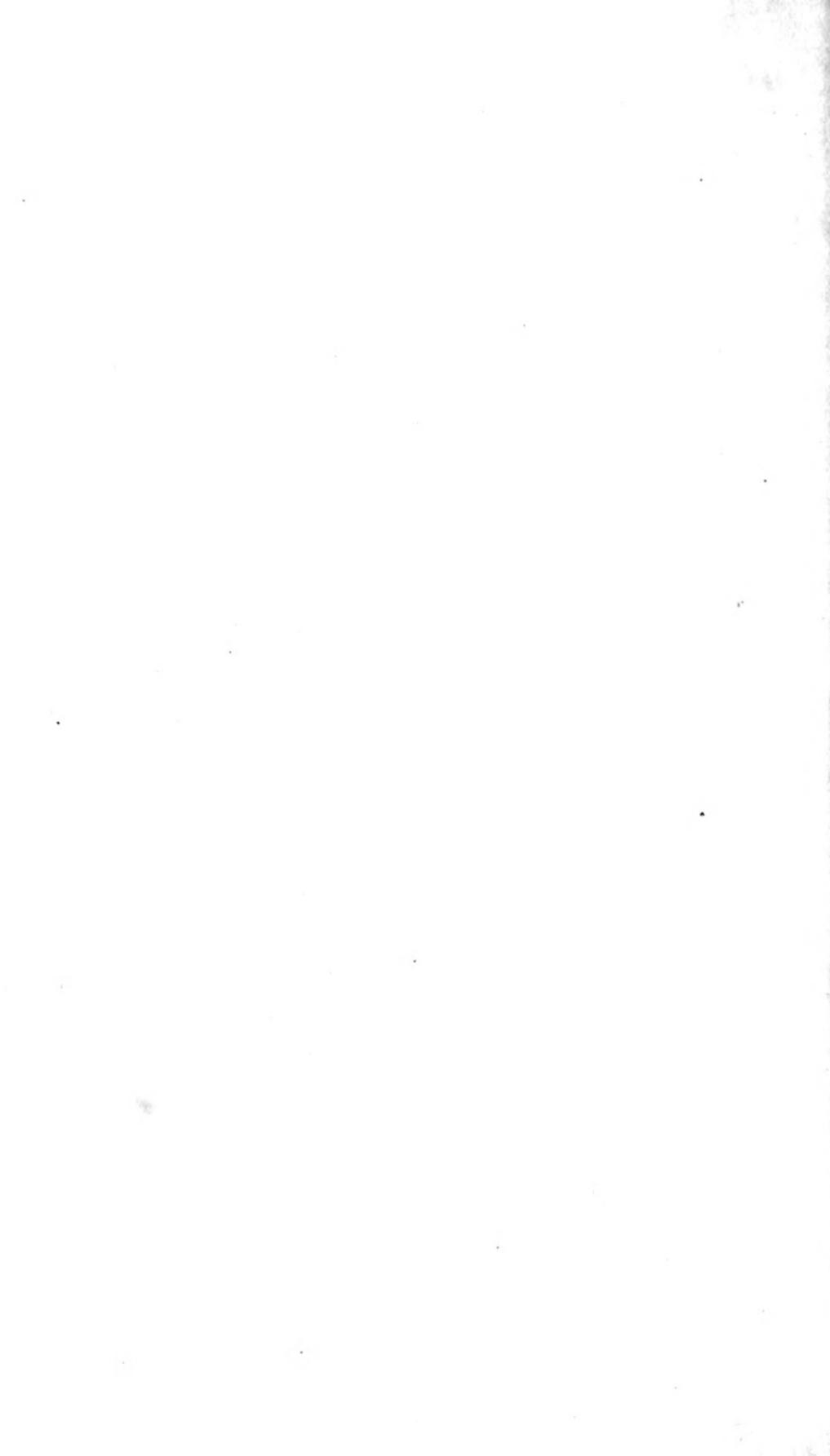


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EVA DESMOND:

OR,

MUTATION.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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M U T A T I O N.

CHAPTER I.

INFLUENCE.

ERNEST CLIFTON corresponded regularly with his cousin. His letters, perhaps more than anything else, justified Miss Boare's suspicions of his feelings; not that they were love letters in the general acceptation of the term; nothing could be more unlike: they did not contain one word of nonsense, and seldom or never an endearing expression. In that respect they might have been written to his grandmother. But they were so long, so minute, so confiding; he seemed to lay open his whole heart to her. He gave her all the details of his daily life, laid bare his secret self, told her of every pleasure and annoyance, every flattering word, and every cut to his feelings. Ernest's feelings were more acute and sensitive than people

imagined; he concealed a good deal of them under an impassive exterior; but in his letters to Eva the inward man appeared. He asked her opinion, her advice on everything; asked as if he meant to profit by it. Letters such as these were necessarily very long, notwithstanding their frequency. The last fact Eva had no means of concealing from Mrs. Herbert, who was never absent when the post-bag was brought in, and always opened it herself, and scanned the outside of every letter before she gave it to the owner. Eva could only baffle her in one particular. The sheets being folded separately, she could avoid taking more than one out of the envelope, and so conceal the real length of the letter. The other sheets were always carried out of sight to be devoured.

These letters were a great pleasure to Eva, but a dangerous pleasure; they so identified her with the writer. They were answered at night when alone in her own room: one o'clock often saw her still at her desk. She entered with deep interest into all his affairs: often, with the quickness of woman's perception, saw through things that he did not, and lent him the aid of her acuteness. She understood his feelings and dealt

with them very gently ; and if they were ruffled, generally succeeded in soothing them. She often heard people's opinion of himself and his ministry, of which all that could benefit him was cautiously and tenderly repeated. The more tenderly, as she noted with uneasiness that Ernest's sympathies lay with his former parish ; that he looked back with regretful fondness to the intellect and refinement, the music and the paintings, the architecture and the pageantry he had left behind him ; and she thought how insinuating must be that pernicious fascination which could thus allure one whose natural tendencies were for what was rational and sterling, into affection for its gorgeous mummery. But, at the same time, she felt that, if he could avoid any demonstration of Tractarian practices on his first coming, he was not so imbued with its principles that they would cause any controversy between him and his parishioners, while his zealous upright character, his gentleman-like manner, his moderation and consistency, would win their way and gain him good opinions of all men. To guard, therefore, against any alteration in the usual administration of the clerical duties which might cause men to prejudge him, was an object of anxious solicitude to her.

Sometimes collisions would occur. At one time the borough member, whose religious opinions were rather too liberal to be acceptable even to a less orthodox disciplinarian than Ernest, promised the school-house where the Sunday-school was held, and which had been built at his expense, to the Dissenters, for the purpose of their therein holding a tea-party. This permission Ernest positively refused to confirm. The member was angry ; Mr. Griffin was appealed to. That gentleman refused to interfere ; said his curate had sole charge of the parish. Ernest held his ground firmly, so the member had to give way, and the Dissenters sipped their tea in an old store hired for the purpose by their patron. It caused some commotion and some unpleasantness. The member cut Ernest dead when he met him at a dinner-party at the Hiltons of Weston Hall. Ernest, who was very independent minded, did not appear to notice the fact of the M.P.'s presence. Some sidewind remarks the honourable gentleman made in the course of the evening ruffled him a little, but when he went home at night, he found a long soothing letter from Eva, in answer to one he had written recounting the dispute, and when he laid his head upon the pillow under which Eva's

letter lay, he forgot that the borough of Hilton was represented in Parliament at all. Another time, he inadvertently preached in his surplice ; his mind was pre-occupied, and having been in the habit of wearing the surplice in the pulpit in his former parish, it was not surprising that he forgot to change it. But it was an error strongly animadverted on : his antecedents gave a colouring to the idea that the mistake was intentional ; and when party spirit clashes, trifles light as air are converted into evidences of crime. Hard remarks reached Ernest's ears. Vexed and dispirited, he sought consolation in writing to Eva, begging an early reply : " And tell me in it, dear cousin," he wrote, " whether you, too, think it is sufficient proof that I am ' going over to Rome,' as the saying here is, because I forgot to change one robe for another last Sunday."

The night she received this letter Eva sat up and answered it. She was not sorry for an opportunity of expressing her opinion ; and since her interest in her cousin had deepened, she had thought more on those subjects than she had ever done before, or than any one gave her credit for. " God forbid, dearest Ernest," she wrote, " that anything you do should be proof to me that you

are ‘going over to Rome;’ nor must you take too much to heart these remarks you have heard. They were made on the impulse of the moment; most likely are forgotten now: at all events, soon will be, when your conduct is found to be at variance with them. But having come with the name of High Church tendencies, perhaps it will be incumbent on you to be a little more than ordinarily cautious in what you do—(I do not allude to the circumstance of the surplice, that was of course a mere accident, and people will see for themselves that it does not occur again, so do not let it vex you)—but at all times, to avoid running counter to the prejudices of your flock, and to give no opportunity to malice to impute motives unjustly. For my own opinion, if no Church of Rome existed, I do not think these disputed points of garbs or ceremonies would matter one jot; but it is different now, inasmuch as it is one step in that direction; and why take even one? Nor do I like you, Ernest, to make a practice of talking over points of doctrine with Edward Phillips. His opinions are decidedly Puseyish, and will have more weight with you because your sympathies go with them. Why not content yourself with the belief which men, so wise and good as our early reformers,

thought the right one. I do think that many who have seceded from our Church, have pored over some obscure expression or doubtful translation, until they so mystified themselves they did not know what to believe, and were glad to have the responsibility of decision taken off them by a church which holds itself to be infallible. I ought not, perhaps, to write this, for it is merely my own opinion founded on my own observation; I have never read anything or spoken with any one on the subject, but I cannot close my eyes to the fact that men wise, learned, and of deep thought, pass through all the phases of Puseyism, and finally, relinquishing high places and deserting sacred charges, throw themselves into the bosom of that Church on whose idolatry they looked with horror when they were taking the first steps along the subtile path which led to it."

Letters such as these were not without their effect on Ernest: a greater effect than perhaps he was aware of. Advice loses all its harshness when mingled with balm to our feelings, and Eva generally managed to shed so much kindness over her letters—kindness which came from the heart—that no one could for a moment harbour a shadow of resentment, if they also breathed a tone

of gentle warning. One practice of Ernest's she disapproved of and expostulated against. He did not deal with the shopkeepers in Hilton. Eva thought that he ought, both for his own sake and theirs. Many of these tradespeople were Dissenters ; and in their dogged resistance to the Church of England, did not accord to Ernest, as clergyman of the parish, the respect and courtesy they otherwise would have given to the heir of Oakstone. He was nettled at the absence of the deference he was accustomed to, and determined to have no dealings with them ; and accordingly opened an account with a tailor and bootmaker in Salisbury ; his books he got from his old college bookseller in Oxford, and all minor articles came from Eversley ; therefore, as he did not provide his own table, he bought nothing in Hilton. Eva did not think this the way to conciliate his parishioners, either as Dissenters or shopkeepers. Her idea was always to mend whatever admitted of mending. She argued and coaxed—the bookseller above all, because what he sold was equally good and cheap as it was to be got elsewhere : Ernest turned a deaf ear ; the bookseller had been the rudest of any.

“But he is the registrar,” remonstrated Eva ;

“you cannot help coming in contact with him ; it will not make him more civil that he has not your custom.”

“When he had it, he was not civil. He has done with it now, in spite of even your advocacy, Eva.”

“You must not think, dear Ernest, that I am taking the shopkeeper’s part against you ; far from it ; it is of you I am thinking. I own I think a clergyman ought to deal as much as possible with his parishioners ; but besides that, a man’s expenditure adds to his weight and influence in his own parish, which it never can do at a distance : of course, it is but an item, but drops fill the bucket. People become more courteous and respectful to those who benefit them, and *vice versa*. So forcibly do I feel this, that I think Uncle Clifton ought to make Hilton his market-town now that you are there, or throw the weight of his custom into the scale of your popularity. Will you think about it, Ernest ?”

“Perhaps I may, but I will not promise to do more.”

“Do not promise to do anything until you have thought about it.” Eva was a skilful diplomatist.

The day was fixed for Edward and Agnes Clifton’s going to Mowbray, and Mr. and Mrs.

Herbert and Eva were invited to meet them. They were asked to stay from Thursday to Saturday, on which latter day the young Cliftons were to end their visit at Mowbray, and go to Hislop for a little time ; but Mr. Herbert had made a law, from which he never digressed, except in favour of very grand places, always to return home from visiting upon a Friday ; therefore Miss Boare asked Eva to remain behind with her cousins, and return home in the carriage which was to convey them to Hislop on the Saturday, an invitation joyfully accepted. Mrs. Herbert began to conjecture who she should ask to meet the Cliftons when they came to her.

“ Some one young, I suppose, aunt,” said Eva.

“ There is no one young. There is Miss Edwards to be sure.”

“ Oh, aunt, don’t ask another lady : we shall be three young ones already, counting Miss Kings-mill. Eddie, I am sure, would rather have some man whom he could go about with; stroll out, and smoke together.”

“ Boys think they can’t live unless a cigar is stuck in their mouths,” said Mrs. Herbert, contemptuously. “ There is no man here except Mr. Colville, and I will not ask him.”

“ You were saying lately you wanted to ask Mr. Oakley. He is a friend of the Cliftons, and might do well with Edward.”

“ Eva, I should have no objection to have Mr. Oakley here, or any gentleman, provided there is no love going on.” (Eva opened her eyes). “ It is not pleasant to the others,” continued her aunt; “ these two are always together.”

“ Which two ? ”

“ Whichever two set up to fancy they are in love; and they don’t want any one else to come near them. When Jessie Phillips was here, she used to look quite as if she wondered what brought me whenever I followed her and Willie. I went on purpose to prevent her going on with her nonsense. To have two people this way spoils any party, and I don’t choose to have it going on in my house.”

“ Can it be she thinks I want him for myself?” thought Eva. She said aloud. “ But, aunt, Mr. Oakley is not likely to behave so, is he ? ”

“ I don’t know, Eva. I have no objection to ask him here, if there is nothing of the kind.”

“ Do as you like, aunt, but whenever I have seen him, he has paid no one person more attention than another. For my own part, I do not see in

Mr. Oakley the preux chevalier many do ; indeed, I have sometimes thought he lacked politeness."

Whether this remark reassured Mrs. Herbert, the invitation to Mr. Oakley was sent. Eva told Miss Boare, in the hope that that lady would profit by the example and ask him to Mowbray, but she would not.

"But I mean to ask Mr. Ernest Clifton, my dear ; I shall write to him to-night, as I do not suppose that he means to come up —"

"Talk of —" exclaimed Eva, her face flushing brighter than ever, as Ernest appeared leading his pony through the entrance gate.

"Did you know he was coming ?"

"No ; I told him never to tell me, that I might keep clear with Aunt Herbert."

"Well, Eva," said the good-natured old woman, "I will go and keep your aunt clear of you for a little while ; she is in the garden."

"Are you not going to ask Ernest to Mowbray, Miss Boare ?"

"Not to-day, my dear. He will stay the night, won't he ?"

"Oh, yes ; sure to."

"I mean to speak to your aunt before I ask him."

“ To aunt ! ”

“ Yes, my dear ; I should not like to ask him without, for I have never yet invited him to Mowbray. She may say to me hereafter, ‘ You encouraged it, and asked them to meet at your house.’ ”

“ But, surely you may say we met at hers,” expostulated Eva.

The old lady was inexorable, she was too much afraid of Mrs. Herbert to take the step without her knowledge, but she promised Eva to say it in such a manner that Mrs. Herbert could not object to her inviting whom she pleased to her own house. She hurried away before Ernest entered.

“ What a comfort to find you alone, Eva ; better fortune than I dared hope for.” He drew her to him, and I am afraid was guilty of the crime whose perpetration Mrs. Herbert’s entrance had prevented the last time they were together.

“ Have you no fear of Aunt Herbert before your eyes ? ” asked Eva, drawing back her head, and looking up with her smiling blushing face into his.

“ How can I think of any one but you, Eva, when I am thus ? ” His face was bent over her again.

“ You are getting very wicked.”

“ No, but very good, loving my relations. We are cousins, Eva : almost brother and sister.”

A grave shadow flitted across his companion’s face at his remark. “ Have you seen Eddie ?” she asked, lightly.

“ Yes.”

“ How is he ?”

“ Very lame ; appears a good deal cut up.”

“ Poor fellow !”

“ He is going to Mowbray next week.”

“ Yes ; and you are to be asked to meet him.”

“ Where ? Here ?”

“ No, to Mowbray.”

“ Oh, not a foot will I go to Mowbray. I cannot, Eva. I must not leave my parish so often. I can’t do it, dear. There was a conflict between duty and inclination before I set out this morning, I can tell you. I have to go to Salisbury on business, next week. You must not ask me to come so soon again ; you really must not, dear.”

“ I have not asked you, Ernest ; I have not spoken one word since I told you you were to be invited.”

“ No, but you are looking —”

“ I cannot help looking disappointed. I thought you would come.”

“ You must not be disappointed. Shall you be there ? ”

“ Yes ; from Thursday till Saturday.”

“ You know very well, Eva, I would come if I could.”

“ Uncle and Aunt Herbert leave on Friday.”

“ And you stay behind ? ”

“ Yes, until the next day.”

“ I don’t think I can come. Do you wish it very much ? See if I have any engagement for those days.” He put his pocket-book into her hand, while duty and inclination had another tussle.

“ There are too capital C’s down on Thursday.”

“ Catechumen Class. I could change that to Wednesday. Is that all ? ”

“ Friday is blank. Saturday has N.S. opposite to it.”

“ Night School : I should be back in time for that.”

“ Then you will come ? ”

“ Eva, Eva, you ought to be helping me to keep away instead of tempting me to come. If I do indulge you this time you must pay me for it.” He stooped.

“ That is a popish doctrine, and I will not encourage it.”

“ What?”

“ Sale of indulgences.”

“ I nearly forgot; I have a note for you, aunt, from Charles Oakley,” said Ernest, searching his pockets after dinner; “ I must have left it in my other coat.”

“ Never mind it now. Did he say if he was coming here?”

“ He said he was coming the week after next to meet Ned.”

“ Very ungallant of him when he was to meet three young ladies as well,” said Mr. Herbert. “ You must come too, Ernest; we shall want another pair of trousers; we shall have three maids, and must provide them with a beau a-piece or there will be pulling of caps.”

“ I shall be very happy, sir.”

“ Your uncle had no idea Miss Boare intended to ask Ernest to Mowbray,” said Mrs. Herbert to Eva, after the young curate had departed on the following morning, “ or I am sure he would not have asked him here.”

“ Why, aunt?”

“ Because he does not approve of his leaving his parish so often.”

“ He works hard when he is in it.”

“Yes; but he is much away. He is going to Mowbray next week and coming here the week after, and he intends to stop at Mowbray until Saturday; how many clergymen make it a point of returning to their parish upon Friday; your uncle always does.”

Eva shook a smile from the corners of her mouth, an obstinate one that wanted to stay; it took a good shake to dislodge it.

“Ernest is young and strong, perhaps he does not require rest before the Sunday’s duty.”

“It is not that; your uncle does not require to rest himself.”

“What else?” Naughty Eva!

“Why, they think it a right thing; they don’t wish to be absent until the last moment they can. If they wish they can prepare their sermon.”

“I have heard Ernest say he is always two sermons in advance, and I know that he visits both coming and going. He said he should be back in time for the night school on Saturday.”

Here Miss Boare entered the room.

“Where is Mr. Herbert?”

“I do not know” replied his wife; “very likely about the parish. There are some sick people; I

should not wonder if he had gone to see them."

The same smile came back to Eva's lips, regardless of the shaking it had got last time. Perhaps Miss Boare saw it.

"I want to see him badly," she said; "my man has come over on business. I think I will just inquire if he is to be found," and she bustled out of the room. Presently she returned; "Hodson says Mr. Herbert has ridden into Gelstone, and, he is sure, won't be back till dinner, so I was obliged to send the man away."

Mrs. Herbert was busy reading, and did not appear to hear, but she looked so poisonful, I am afraid she must.

CHAPTER II.

THE day of the Mowbray gathering arrived. Miss Boare had gone home from Hislop a few days before, to prepare "the smallest quantity they could live on," Mr. Herbert said. Grimshawe was packing her mistress's carriage box; Eva, bright and happy as a bird, was flitting about collecting her clothes, music, and work, and stowing them in the very small space which could be spared to her from her aunt's requirements.

"Please, Miss Desmond, I don't think you can put your music in; it will crush missus' fine things; could not it go loose in the carriage?"

"Aunt Herbert hates having anything loose in the carriage."

"Please, ma'am, would it fit in your carriage-bag?"

"That is top-full and running over. But, never mind, you can put it on the seat under the

cushion that I am to sit on; no one need know anything about it."

"Very well, ma'am."

It was an hour's drive to Mowbray. They started at three o'clock to give the horses time to return, Miss Boare having a particular objection to horses or servants remaining at Mowbray; she did not mind the carriage. As they drove up to the door, Miss Boare with Edward Clifton came along the terrace to meet them, Edward walking slowly and with difficulty, and looking out of health. He was greatly changed since Eva had last seen him. He was larger, and looked much older. The sun of Spain had burnt his skin and darkened his hair. The soft downy lip which had last pressed hers was now furnished with a curled and well-trimmed moustache. The innocent boyish expression of his countenance was replaced by that, which a knowledge of the world, and not in its most immaculate phases, generally substitutes. He was very elegantly dressed for a morning lounging, and there was a great deal of grace even in his halting gait. He raised his cap as he came up to the carriage. Eva was the last to leave it. As she stepped out, Edward received her in his arms, and gave her

a kiss, the bold-faced gallantry of which was intended to cover its real tenderness.

“ Dear Eddie, I am sorry to see you so lame. How you are altered ! ”

“ In some respects I am the same as when you last saw me. Darling Eva, can you not guess what they are ? ” he whispered, as the older ones went into the house.

“ Where are the others ? Where is Agnes ? ” she asked hastily.

“ You have seen Agnes so much later than you have me, I should think you need not hurry from me to look for her,” he spoke with scornful discontent.

“ I am not going to look for her. I was only wondering where they were.”

“ They took a message for Miss Boare to a cottage on the hill : they will be here presently. Come for a turn on the terrace to wait for them. Come——that is, if you can put up with so crippled an escort.”

“ You will soon get better, Eddie,” she said soothingly ; “ your native air will do a great deal for you.”

“ There is something will do more for me than my native air.” He turned and gazed in fond admiration at her.

“ My own, darling Eva, you are more beautiful than ever.”

“ Not I, Edward. Age improves no one. I shall be growing older and uglier every day.”

“ Hitherto you have been growing handsomer, nor have you reached the culminating point yet. Oh, Eva! how I longed for one sight of your sweet face when I was ill at Gibraltar.”

“ Here is Agnes!” exclaimed Eva, as three figures emerged from among the shrubs at the other end of the terrace.

“ Hang it! one would think Agnes was a lover,” muttered her companion. “ Are you and Ernest any better friends than you were, or is it still sharp-shooting?”

“ Ernest is more lenient to the frailties of sinners like me, now that he is a parson.”

“ Now is the time he ought to be denouncing them.”

“ He contents himself with doing that from the pulpit.”

Agnes and Eva met with a warm kiss, Ernest shook hands, Miss Kingsmill curtsied. It was her first introduction to Eva. Miss Kingsmill was a tall, slight young woman, with fair hair,

weak eyes, and a flat face which did not possess much expression; the little it did was that of great amiability: she had a low and peculiarly sweet toned voice, which at first was very pleasing to the ear, but its monotony was so complete it very soon tired the hearer, and actually became irksome to listen to for any length of time. She often spoke for a long time together. She had a habit of telling tales relating to people of her acquaintance: all of a most melancholy tendency. Eva said, after listening to her for a night, she would not be one of Miss Kingsmill's friends for any thing; they all appeared to be the most unfortunate people on the face of the earth. Between the misfortunes she was relating, her expressions of commiseration and lamentation, and the monotony of her sweet, melancholy voice, she was not a very enlivening companion; but she was a sensible, amiable, well-principled girl: she actively assisted her father, who was a clergyman, in his parochial duties; took care of an invalid sister and a little orphan nephew; and had twice refused a home of her own, because she thought her loss would be so heavily felt in the one she must leave. Unlike herself, except in worth, as it was possible for two

people to be, from the moment she saw Eva she felt irresistibly drawn towards her. She thought she was the brightest and most beautiful being she had ever beheld ; but it was not that which captivated her fancy : she did not know what it was ; but from the moment she beheld her, she liked her.

The party assembled over the small fire in the drawing-room before dinner. Miss Boare did not think it a cold day (days were never cold at Mowbray) ; no one agreed with her. Mrs. Herbert remarked that the fire was low.

“Indeed, Mrs. Herbert, it is going down a little, but I think coal put on now will only blacken it. We shall be going into the dining-room in a moment ; then, of course, it will be replenished. It must be very near dinner.”

Some time passed, and no appearance of dinner ; the fire waxed smaller and dimmer.

“Well, my cook is not as punctual as she ought to be,” remarked the hostess, “she has no great deal to get ; she is so inexperienced, I was afraid to trust her with a large dinner. Whatever I have I like to have good, so I said, ‘I will not give you much to do, but do it well.’”

Rather melancholy news for the expectant party. There was a rumble inside Mr. Herbert’s

capacious corporation that seemed to say, the internal members were non-content. At last the dinner came. A pair of fowls, whose lean-ness might have gained them favour with the Bishop of Salisbury, a small pig's cheek, some slices of mutton hashed, and poached eggs on spinach. Short work was made of it. Eddie's was the capricious appetite of a pampered invalid, he scarcely touched anything; but the other four young, healthy, hungry people could make a hearty dinner on any wholesome food, no matter how plain. Mr. Herbert's appetite was enormous; and the two elder ladies' gastronomic powers were of an average description. If any one was dependent on the leavings, they were in a bad way. Then came such a demolition of sweets as had never been known within the walls of Mowbray since it was built. A whole dish of tartlets, with very thick sides and a very small proportion of jam within, which had been ex-pected to swell the respectability of every meal for the term of the visit's duration, disappeared at the very first onslaught. Little the economy practised in their size availed; the enemy van-quished them *en masse*.

“I will put this fellow from ever appearing

again," whispered Ernest to Eva, who sat beside him, seizing upon an old acquaintance of Eva's, in the shape of a pyramid of damson cheese, and plunging a spoon into its centre. It had been turned out of the shape and turned in again so often, that the only bit of glazing left was at the very apex ; the sides wore that furry coat which preserves get from being parted from the sides of the shapes. But Ernest was mistaken —the crumbled walls of the pyramid appeared next day in the centre of some tartlets still smaller than their predecessors.

" Boys," said Mr. Herbert, when the ladies had left the dining-room, " if I do not very much mistake, as I passed the door before dinner, I saw Miss Boare put a bottle of wine under the side-board. Just try, Ernest, you are the most nimble; in far, close by the hind leg."

" There is a bottle of something," said Ernest, pulling it out; " sherry is on the cork."

" All right ! Bring it here. No, don't ring for old Corbet and have her popping out to ask him what we wanted. Just draw the cork yourself. The old lady did not intend that should come out unless it was specially demanded."

" I suppose none of you will take more wine ?"

said the jovial old parson, as he drained the bottle thus abstracted. "No use us stopping here; come to the ladies."

"Was the music brought?" asked Ernest, leaning over the back of Eva's chair.

"Oh, I hope so," said Miss Kingsmill's low voice; "I have been looking forward to hear some Irish melodies."

"Yes; I have brought my music. Perhaps, Ernest, you would get it; it is on the table in the front hall."

She was at the piano playing a plaintive air when he returned with the music.

"Oh, do go on: that is so beautiful," said Miss Kingsmill; "I should not have expected to hear such an air from you."

"Why? It is an Irish one."

"Yes; but you look as if you could have no part with anything but what was bright and gay."

"Miss Kingsmill thinks melancholy things don't harmonize with your face, Eva. Come, give us something more lively or we shall all be in tears, and no one looks well with red eyes."

Eva laughed, and changed the air to "Norah Creina."

“Choose a song, Ernest; all your favourites are there.” She sang the one he selected.

“Do you sing ‘Love not?’” asked Miss Kingsmill, “I think it a most beautiful song.”

“So it is, but this cousin of mine will not allow any song to be sung in his hearing that contains the word ‘love.’”

“Is he so hostile to the blind god?”

“Thinks him a goose, I believe: love and nonsense are synonyms with Ernest.”

“‘Love not’ contains such very wise advice to keep clear of the nonsense, perhaps he will take his veto off it.”

“Shall I sing it, Ernest?”

“You may;” he stooped and whispered in her ear, “but it is advice you must not expect me to take.”

Miss Kingsmill did not hear the words, but she saw the fond smile which answered them—so did another of the company. Edward Clifton was seated at the fire conversing with the hostess and his uncle and aunt, and apparently paying no attention to the group at the piano. Yet he marked all that passed, and the grave expression his features wore was not an indication of pleasure or indifference.

“ Dear, dear Eva, how kind and good you are. You cannot think how often I wish we had been sisters,” said Agnes, clasping her arms round Eva’s neck and kissing her.

They were sleeping together; Eva had been telling her cousin how she had procured an invitation for Charles Oakley to meet her at Hislop.

“ Perhaps we should not be as great friends if we were,” replied Eva.

“ Why not ? ”

“ It is possible our interests might clash; sisters often do.”

“ La, Eva ! how could they ? ”

“ In a thousand little nameless ways which imperceptibly wears affection. Our interests have never yet interfered.”

Eva was thinking at the time that Agnes not unfrequently came the elder sister over Myra a little too strongly: and of her own sister Myra, who had often thwarted and got the better of her.

“ I hope they never may; I should indeed be grieved if our affection lessened, but I feel sure it never will. You never injure any one, and I am very sure I am not going to injure you. But hush!—I hear something—don’t you ? ”

"I heard a door open, and, I think, a step on the stairs. Some servant up late, I suppose."

The fact was Miss Boare had forgotten the bottle of wine under the sideboard. Alarmed lest Corbet should get at it, and under cover of the gentlemen's presence partake of it, she stole down to the dining-room to lock it up. To her dismay it was gone, and a second cork smelling of sherry on the sideboard, told that its fate was sealed.

"Dear me, seeing company is very expensive," was the truism she uttered, for Miss Kingsmill's information, on her return to bed. "Such a quantity of things have been consumed! Two whole bottles of sherry in one night, besides what port was in the decanter, and very nearly half a bottle of Bronte that I had by me in a pint bottle."

"We were a good many," said Miss Kingsmill.

"Only three gentlemen. Ladies drink so little."

"Still, even a glass a-piece is five out of a bottle," said Miss Kingsmill, who knew Miss Boare had taken three glasses for her own share.

"Miss Desmond and Agnes don't take more

than half a glass ; indeed, I don't think drinking wine at all is a very wise habit for young ladies on their preferment. I don't think gentlemen like it. Then the dinner ! Did you ever see anything like it ? Every morsel was eaten."

" It certainly was."

" I am sure I don't know what I shall do for breakfast to-morrow. I intended to have had what was left of the pig's cheek fried ; nothing nicer than a cheek rasher."

" You must relinquish that intention," said Miss Kingsmill, with as near an approach to a laugh as she ever made.

" Yes, it was cut to the very end ; I only wonder they left the bone. I should think it was very bad for Mr. Herbert to eat so enormously as he does, an apoplectic looking man like him. Mr. Ernest Clifton has a very large appetite, too. I don't think it can be good to indulge it so."

" He is young and full of health. Love does not seem to affect either health or appetite."

" What do you mean ?"

" I do not think he comes quite scathless from under those flashing eyes that are so often turned upon him."

"Eva's, you mean; oh, they are cousins you know."

"I know they are."

The latter part of this conversation was repeated to Eva next morning, with an admonition of caution. Miss Boare, like all guilty people, could not divest herself of the idea, that if any discovery of the cousins' affection were made, she should be indicted under the count of 'aiding and abetting.'

CHAPTER III.

PROHIBITIONS.

“DEAR me, Mrs. Herbert, I am sorry you are going so early; I was in hopes you would have stayed lunch.” Miss Boare did not say that until the carriage was ordered and Mrs. Herbert dressed to depart.

“Thank you, no, Miss Boare, we could not stay. Mr. Herbert is anxious to get back early. I daresay he has business in the parish, and —”

Here Mr. Herbert entered, and his wife stopped short. Miss Boare repeated her hospitable regrets about the lunch. Mr. Herbert, whose recollection of the breakfast made him by no means anxious to partake of another meal at Mowbray, good-humouredly replied—

“No, thank you, Miss Boare, we cannot stay indeed; we have been most agreeably entertained, and are very much obliged for your hospitality.”

"I am sure I am very glad you think so, Mr. Herbert. It has been a great pleasure to me to see you. I only wish you and Mrs. Herbert could have stayed lunch. But perhaps you have business?"

"No, indeed, I've no business. Wickcliffe of Hood is coming to fish opposite Hislop to-day, and I dare say a gad along the river with him will be the extent of my labours till dinner."

"Aunt Herbert appears to be under the same delusion as ever regarding my uncle's parochial engagements," said Edward Clifton when they were gone. "Whenever I have been stopping at Hislop, if any one asked where he was, she always pursed up her mouth, and said he was visiting some sick or sorry individual; and when he came home, as sure as a gun he said he had been in to town to hear the news, or at a magistrate's meeting, or gadding with some passer-by; then aunt would look daggers."

"It often puts me in mind of a family I know in Ireland," said Eva. "They live in the town near us. The youngest son is a doctor whose merits are not appreciated; he never had a patient in his life. As he had nothing more profitable to do, he was used to go gadding wherever any entertain-

ment was to be got, and a lot of old sisters he had always said he was out seeing patients. I never called there yet but they told me he was professionally engaged, though poor Ulick himself used to bemoan to me how no one would employ him. I slept there one night, and lacing my boot in the morning, broke the lace in two places, and was in great distress. The doctor, who was the best natured fellow in the world, went down the town to buy me a new one, and while he was out his father inquired for him:

“He is gone out to see a patient or two,” said Miss Wilhelmina for my edification. “I often think of them at Hislop.”

Ernest’s hand was here laid gently on her shoulder. He was standing behind her chair. She coloured a little :

“That is not satirical, Ernest.”

“Is it not?”

“I think not. It is only relating a fact.”

“And attaching no ridicule to it?”

“Where is the good of anything funny happening if one may not talk about it?”

He was silent. There was a look in his calm grave face which always made Eva feel uncomfortable.

"Do not look so, Ernest," she whispered as she rose and passed him; "I will not say it again."

"What is to be done to-day?" A question often asked by those who have nothing to do, who want to make work vanquish the day, not to make the day accomplish the work. The party in Miss Boare's drawing-room looked as if they badly wanted some occupation cut out for them. Six pairs of hands and not a shred of employment between them. Edward was lying on the sofa, Miss Boare's apron under his head, because she did not like to have the anti-macassar used; Agnes was on a hassock by his side, trying all she could to make sisterly attention atone for cousinly neglect—a thankless task. Ernest had followed Eva to the window, where they both stood looking at the high conical hill which rose from the very terrace they looked out on. Miss Boare was standing on the hearthrug, getting whatever heat the fire afforded, and pestering Edward, who seemed in no amiable mood, with questions as to the expenses of living at Gibraltar. Miss Kingsmill, standing a little aloof, was silently contemplating the whole party, more especially the pair at the window.

“What’s to be done to-day?” said Ernest, turning quickly round. “This is the third time of asking: if it is true about the charm, I suppose some of you will speak.”

“Would it not be nice to take a spud and walk up the hill to get some of that moss we say yesterday, for the rockery at home?” said Agnes. “What do you say, Ernest?”

“Margaret will walk up with you,” interposed Miss Boare, who did not wish Ernest to be appropriated, and who never considered it necessary to give Miss Kingsmill a voice in the disposal of her society.

“But we should want Ernest to dig it up; the ground is very hard. Will you come Ernest?”

“With all my heart. Perhaps we may get to the top of the hill to-day, the view must be very fine from there.”

Eva was surprised. She was not a good walker; and, unaccustomed to walk up hill, it fatigued her so much she had left off attempting it. This she knew Ernest was aware of.

“You and I will content ourselves with remaining on the flat, Eddie,” she said, rather piquantly.

The young soldier brightened; he turned to her with a face clear of clouds, but Eva's seemed less bright than usual.

A few moments after she left the room. The answer to what is to be done to-day? had not been satisfactory to her. Before she reached her room Ernest overtook her.

“Eva, I am not going to leave you behind with Ned.”

“If you go you must; I cannot walk up that steep hill.”

“I know you cannot; I would not have you do it. But there is an old pony here, I want you to ride it. I can easily borrow a side-saddle at one of the farmers'. Will you come? I will walk by your side. Will you, dear? I must stay at home with you, if you will not. Eva, dear, speak to me.”

“I will do whatever you wish.”

“Well, I will go and see about the saddle. Dress yourself before lunch, that we may start the moment it is over.”

“You will be back to lunch?”

“That I will. I did not get half enough of breakfast: I think Miss Boare must be keeping Advent.”

The side-saddle was borrowed, and a spud procured. After lifting Eva into the former, Ernest turned to Miss Kingsmill and politely offered to carry the latter for her, but that lady, with more firmness than might be expected from her soft inexpressive face, obstinately refused to deliver it into his custody.

“Miss Clifton and I will go through the shrubbery,” said she. “The road runs behind it: you must go that way with the pony.”

Ernest led the pony round, but when he came to where the shrubbery walk opened into it, there appeared no sign of the pedestrians.

“I thought they must have followed the road from this point,” he remarked.

“Perhaps they have gone straight up the hill; these trees would hide them from our sight,” replied Eva.

Behind the conical hill we have mentioned, rose one lower in height but of considerable extent, and broken by rapid undulations into a succession of hills; no sooner had you reached the summit of one of these elevations, imagining that it must command a most extensive view, than you found that another, hitherto unseen, rose beyond it and shut out every prospect but itself. Round the

base of these hills was a winding cart track leading to a very large sand pit far in the bosom of the hills. Along this track Ernest accompanied the pony.

“If we go up the hill we must turn off here,” he said, as they came to a gap in the hedge.

“The way looks steep and rough,” replied Eva.

“So it does. To my mind it is as fatiguing to ride up a steep hill like that, as to walk it. Suppose we keep to the track?”

Eva gladly assented; she always felt as if she should fall back over the pony’s tail on a steep ascent.

Miss Kingsmill’s obstinate rejection of his proffered assistance with regard to carrying the spud had seemed to make some impression upon Ernest; two or three times during the course of the ride he reverted to it. But when they had gone a considerable way along the sand road, and in its windings had lost sight of the hill they at first intended to mount, he seemed suddenly to recollect, and exclaimed —

“After all, it was well I had not the spud, as we did not go their way.”

Eva smiled. “Perhaps, Miss Kingsmill had some misgivings about seeing you again.”

“I don’t know why she should. We intended going the same way when we started.”

Whether any light broke on him Eva did not know, but in a little time he looked up in her face and said,—

“Do you think Agnes had any misgiving, Eva?”

“I do not know, but I think not.”

They had come to a level part of the road. Eva, who felt cold, got off the pony and walked, leaning on Ernest’ arm.

“What day shall I come to Hislop, Eva?” he said.

“When you like: Mr. Oakley comes on Monday.”

“Had I not better come then? While he walks with Agnes I can have you all to myself.”

“It is soon for you to come again; besides what is to be done with Eddie?”

“Let him flirt with Miss Kingsmill. I suppose Miss Boare will be off to Hislop as soon as we clear out of this; I am sure the larder will be empty.”

“I dare say, but I doubt that Eddie will be satisfied.”

Her companion turned sharply round.

“Eva, I am not going to have you flirting with Ned.”

“Why should you say that, Ernest? I do not.”

“I will not have him kiss you.”

“He never does.”

“Didn’t he yesterday?”

“Only when we first met.”

“I will not allow it at any time. You’ll quarrel with me if you do.”

“I will not quarrel with you, Ernest; he shall not kiss me again: but how did you know?”

“Saw you as I came down the hill; and I was in no good-humour, I can tell you.” He drew her to him. “Eva, I cannot let any one touch these lips but myself.”

She turned shyly away, but her smile forgave him.

“Well, if you promise to be very well behaved, I will not come till the end of the week. It will be better not to leave Hilton so soon again, though I always visit along the road. Hilton parish runs nearly to Brackley. I must go to Salisbury some day.”

“I thought you had been there.”

“No: when you tempted me to come here I put off Salisbury.”

"You must let me talk a little to Eddie when we go in," Eva said, as they went back to the house; "you know I disappointed him of his walk by coming with you."

"You had no business to promise him that walk. It will be time for you to dress for dinner when you go in."

"But in the evening. May I, Ernest?"

"Yes; provided you don't make me jealous."

"You are not a jealous disposition surely, Ernest?"

"I never thought I was until I knew you."

CHAPTER IV.

FAMILY PRIDE.

THE party were assembled in the drawing-room at Hislop, a snug, cheerful-looking room of moderate size, furnished with all the necessary appendages of a common sitting-room without any pretension to the ornamental elegance of luxurious refinement. There were no rare cabinets, no porcelain vases, no snowy statuettes or ormolu what-nots ; but there was a good cottage piano ; a well-filled bookcase, in which any one who was not a novel reader, could scarcely have failed to find a book congenial to his taste : there was a small writing-table covered with well-used blotters, the papier maché one on the sofa table not being expected to be used, nor was the silver inkstand beside it, a wedding present to Mrs. Herbert and the enjoyer of a sinecure ever since : there was one of painted wood along with the servicable blotters. No

one could object to that innocuous piece of economy; their calligraphy would look just as well accomplished with the less costly materials.

As not so unobservable an offence was the thriftiness, which placed arm or easy chairs in such inconvenient out-of-the-way places that no one could get at them to sit down, looked upon by the young visitors at Hislop, who, as ease-loving as if they had been born forty years earlier than they actually were, by no means liked the bolt upright position they were obliged to assume on that most uncomfortable, loin-harassing apology for a convenience, an ordinary chair.

“Set them up with easy chairs!” quoth Mrs. Herbert, in answer to Eva’s mediative appeal, “they will want sofas to lie down on next.”

No fear of any one lying down on hers. I wonder what perversion of idea of all that is comfortable or sightly, existed in the minds of our forefathers, when they devised that commodity,—now happily disappearing beneath the touch of modern taste and luxury—known by the name of “sofa table.” Perhaps my readers may be too fashionable ever to have seen one. Long and narrow they were, and placed in front of the sofa, near enough to hide all glimpse of

the figures that sat behind it except the portion which came above it. Little use to adjust the drapery in graceful folds, or to let peep from under it enough of a tiny foot to permit a guess at the ankle beyond, if you sat behind a sofa-table, no one in the room knew whether you had any legs at all.

Mrs. Herbert's sofa was against the wall, in the corner, and so close to it was the table pushed, that very immaterial, indeed, must be the form that insinuated itself between them. In another corner were two arm-chairs in a nook formed by the curve of a round table, which, at its extreme breadth, almost touched the walls on either side, and blocked up ingress to the angle. Both sofa and arm-chairs were very old-fashioned, but in an excellent state of preservation, which their locality was calculated to superinduce.

There was a bright fire in the grate, a comfort always to be met with at Hislop, and beside it, in the only available easy chair in the room, which he had taken the opportunity of Mr. Herbert's absence to appropriate, reclined Edward Clifton, with, young as he was, all the listless indolence of a blasé invalid. There were no traces of ill-temper on his countenance, only

languor and ennui: the clouds which had overshadowed it for some days after the hill excursion at Mowbray having evanesced beneath the influence of more flattering treatment. Beside him, work in hand, which in atonement for past offences she scarcely looked at, was seated Eva, her back to the piano, where, by her contrivance, Agnes was singing with Mr. Oakley. Mrs. Herbert was sitting at her writing-desk, stiff and straight as a boarding-school miss on her high-backed chair, making out club tickets. Miss Boare, her netting on her foot, was twisting her eyes from one to another, trying her best not to lose any glimpse that was to be seen.

Miss Kingsmill's light eyelashes seemed resting on her cheek, so intent upon her book she looked; but either those light eyelashes must have admitted some rays to penetrate, or else they must have been furtively raised when no one heeded, for none there was more fully conscious of the living tableau than that quiet reading girl. Sometimes, when Eva said a sparkling thing, or laughed a merrier laugh than usual, she would look up at her sparkling face, and there was always a shade of sadness in the look of admiration she bent on her, almost akin to pity, as if she for-

boded such brilliancy could not last; that her “lot was the common lot of all” and “some day would be dark and dreary.”

While the inmates of Hislop were thus passing the morning, a handsome carriage swept past the window.

“Mrs. Bloomfield,” said Mrs. Herbert, in as indifferent a tone as possible, just as one would turn and name which member of the family had passed by the window. Yet Mrs. Bloomfield was a rare visitor at Hislop. A daughter of Lord Carrickmore, an Irish nobleman, she had married a gentleman of large fortune in the county. They resided at a handsome place about two miles on the Hilton side of Brackley and kept a cheerful hospitable house to which people were glad to be asked, notwithstanding that the hostess had the reputation of being a little proud and satirical. Though Mrs. Bloomfield came but seldom—not once in two years—to Hislop, the Herberts were frequently invited to Ash Park, for as the Bloomfields saw a great deal of company, each neighbouring family’s turn to be invited came often. It is true that the Herberts sometimes declined an invitation, just to show that they would not be always had for the asking. However, that was a vindica-

tion of their value they did not think it necessary often to resort to.

It had been a great annoyance at Hislop that when the Edward Phillipses came to reside in Brackley Mrs. Bloomfield had not visited them, although Mrs. Herbert had tried a gentle hint on the subject. She was always especially mortified at any slight to her own family. She had married into one of much older standing, and consequently, respectability; and more than once it had reached her ears that among the least cordial of her husband's family, reflections had been cast upon hers. Self-love was wounded — the more as she was ambitious of a good position in society—hence her great anxiety for the advancement of the social position of her own relatives, and her great animosity to any event which she considered injurious to such exaltations.

But all this time we have left Mrs. Bloomfield sitting in her carriage at the door, though her footman rang the hall bell with a violence that made the house vibrate, and Mrs. Herbert followed it up with a sharp pull at the one in the drawing-room. At last the visitor was announced. With the easy self-confidence of those who feel they are going among people not their equals, the Honourable

Mrs. Bloomfield entered, a small sized, pretty looking woman, with a bright half-roguish smile; and very elegantly dressed. She was acquainted with Miss Boare—as who was not?—and with Mr. Oakley. With the latter she was rather intimate, and he knew her sufficiently, perfectly to understand an arch look that glided from the two youngest ladies of the party to himself. Mrs. Herbert introduced, “my nephew, Mr. Clifton; my niece, Miss Clifton.” She did not name Eva; as the others lived in the county she thought it would be more advantageous to make them acquainted.

Mrs. Bloomfield slided carelessly into the arm-chair which young Clifton vacated in her favour. She had been visiting in the neighbourhood, she said, so came on to call at Hislop. She talked a great deal and gaily, touching lightly on the chief topics of the neighbourhood.

“By the by, Mrs. Herbert,” she said, suddenly, “I suppose you know that Mrs. Phillips has another daughter?”

“No, indeed, I did not,” replied Mrs. Herbert, nor did hearing it now appear to afford her much pleasure.

“Yes, indeed, poor woman! It is a sad thing

how fast curates will have children : they tell me this is the fourth."

"Have you seen their other children ?" asked Mrs. Herbert.

"No, never. They were too young to come to my children's ball, or I would have asked them, though I do not know the parents. Indeed, I should have called on them, his being a clergyman and everything, but I understood I should only be putting them out of their way."

"Oh, Mrs. Bloomfield !" exclaimed Mrs. Herbert, "I do not see how your calling on them could in any way inconvenience them."

"Would it not ? then I am sorry I did not go. I fancied I should be in their way."

"I am sure Mrs. Phillips would at any time be very glad to see you," said Mrs. Herbert rather proudly.

Mrs. Bloomfield here turned to Eva, who was speaking to Charles Oakley.

"Are you of this county, Miss Clifton ?"

"No : my name is Desmond," replied Eva.

"Ah ! then you are a countrywoman of mine ; I thought I recognised the tongue. What part of Ireland do you come from ?"

"Cavan."

"I do not know that part at all; I am from Cork. I know Desmonds in Kerry."

"They are the same family. They are the Catholic branch, we the Protestant."

"Ah, my acquaintances were Catholics." She continued to converse with Eva for the most part during the remainder of the visit. "I hope I shall see you at Ash Park," said she, rising to go away. "I did not know I had a countrywoman so near, so good a specimen too of our Irish maids." She shook hands warmly with her and took her leave.

"She sat chattering so long it has interrupted my work," said Mrs. Herbert sitting down with a look of importance to her club account, but the luncheon bell rang, and she was disturbed again. Mr. Oakley proposed a walk as they returned from the dining-room through the hall. He knew Mrs. Herbert's occupation would prevent her coming, but he was diplomat enough to prefer his proposal to her.

"I cannot go, Mr. Oakley," said that lady, benignly. "I must get these tickets ready, but I dare say all the others will like a walk."

"Walking is too hard work after eating—bad for digestion," said Edward Clifton, lazily stretching himself; "I shall go have a pipe in the harness-room."

“I shall not go out, Mr. Oakley,” said Miss Boare, “it is very cold, and I am so subject to inflammation in my windpipe that —”

“And they all with one consent began to make excuse,” interrupted Charles Oakley.

“No, indeed, Mr. Oakley, you must not say that—the young ladies have not; I am sure they will be ready for a walk if you ask them.”

“I will begin with this very good specimen of an Irishwoman, according to Mrs. Bloomfield.”

“You have specimens of three countries here: Miss Kingsmill is, I believe, a Welshwoman. Each considers herself a remarkably good specimen of her country; so please do not be invidious,” replied Eva.

“Well, I hope all three will agree upon one point, and that is to come out and walk.”

Bonnets and shawls were fetched, and they started.

Eva was the first down; she and Mr. Oakley stood on the gravel in front of the portico, waiting for the others to join them. They were in view from the place where Miss Boare sat in the drawing-room, and as she watched them it suddenly flashed on her small mind, which, small as it was, could be cunning enough at times, to

put Mrs. Herbert—true bloodhound though she was regarding lovers—on a wrong scent.

“There go Miss Desmond and her knight,” remarked the little daine.

“What?” exclaimed Mrs. Herbert.

“Miss Desmond and Mr. Oakley are going for a walk.”

“Are not the others with them?”

“I suppose they are following; I think I hear their voices. Mr. Oakley is a nice young man.”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Herbert, drily.

“So is Miss Desmond,” continued Miss Boare, as if following a train of thought, “a very nice girl, so clever, and so sweet-tempered; I do not think a man could have a nicer wife. I should think Mr. Oakley would be well off; at least, very comfortable, should not you?”

“I do not think Mr. Oakley at all a desirable husband, if you mean that, Miss Boare,” said Mrs. Herbert, sharply.

“Oh, indeed! I thought the young ladies rather set their caps at him.”

“Girls are so foolish they will marry any one. His income will be but moderate, and he has exceedingly delicate health. I think the woman

who marries him must look forward to spending a good deal of her time nursing."

"He has not been ill for more than two years now. It is so hard to get a husband exactly to your choice."

"Then I think you are better without one."

This last sentence was delivered very dogmatically. Miss Boare made no reply; she had said enough to effect her purpose. That evening Mrs. Herbert chanced to be alone with her nieces in the drawing-room, the other two ladies having gone upstairs. Eva mentioned a letter which she had received from Ireland that morning, informing her that a match had been broken off, which was to have taken place between a cousin she was very fond of, and an officer of the East India Company's service. She seemed to deplore it very much.

"But," she added, "I think Sarah may have been to blame; Mr. Owen was a hasty tempered man, and she did not consider it enough."

"If he were, Eva," said her aunt, "I think she is well rid of him."

"But he was a very good match for her, aunt."

"How can you call it a good match to marry a man with a bad temper."

“ Oh, he was not so bad as that ; besides, aunt, we all cannot choose : if Sarah’s father died to-morrow she would not have a shilling.”

“ I am sure anything is better than to have to live all your life with a cross man.”

“ Is starvation, for it would be little else ? ”

“ People’s friends don’t allow them to starve in these times.”

“ God help those who are dependent on their friends. It speaks highly for Uncle Herbert, aunt, that you married him ; you seem to me to think that if a flaw can be found in people from head to foot they ought to be rejected.”

“ If more followed my way of thinking, Eva,” replied her aunt, tartly, “ there would be fewer foolish matches.”

“ Fewer of any kind,” thought Eva, but she said nothing.

“ Look at Edward Phillips,” continued her aunt, “ a nice concern he has made of it, disgracing all belonging to him. I felt quite ashamed to-day when Mrs. Bloomfield was speaking of them ; she seemed to think they could not even receive her as a morning visitor.”

“ I think they are better without Mrs. Bloomfield’s acquaintance,” replied Eva. “ It is very

possible she might put them about; and as they are, she would not do them any good that I can see."

"But to have relations in such a position!"

"I dare say Edward will get on in the Church in time. Every one seems to say he is very learned, and he is very assiduous at his duty, which this Bishop likes."

Mrs. Herbert did not want to pursue that theme. She looked for another grievance which no one could connect with Hislop.

"Such a pack of children as they will have. Four daughters already! I dare say they will have a dozen before they stop. I should be glad to know what is to become of all those when they grow up?"

"Oh, they will marry some one."

"They will never make good matches."

"Indeed, I do not think they can be refusing a man for a small flaw, such as red hair, or even a squint, unless it be a very bad one," said Eva, with a light laugh.

"Humph! Did Mr. Oakley say at what hour he would leave to-morrow?"

"No; but I fancy not until late, if he goes at

all. He spoke as if he would be with us when we were taking our walk to-morrow."

"Of course he will go; he never stays more than two days. He generally leaves very early."

"Perhaps he may; but while we were out to-day he was speaking of a view that is to be caught from an opening in the wood above the house, and he said, 'We will go that way to-morrow, and I will point it out to you.' That was my reason for thinking he would be here."

"Humph!"

"There was a report that Mr. Oakley admired his cousin, who lives in our neighbourhood," remarked Miss Kingsmill, who had just come in, "I do not know whether there is any truth in it."

"I don't know who he may admire," replied Mrs. Herbert, with emphasis, "but Charles Oakley will never marry any one."

"Why not, aunt?" said Agnes, who had hitherto been a silent listener.

"Because, my dear, his health is so delicate. Charles Oakley is too conscientious a man to marry with the ailments he has."

Here Charles Oakley appeared *in propria*

persona, and cut off all further conjectures of his future intentions—celibate or matrimonial.

“How did you and Mr. Oakley get on during your walk to-day?” asked Eva, as she stepped into the bed in which her cousin was already snugly coiled up.

“Pretty well; he talked a good deal. He was praising you, Eva—said you had the sunniest smile he ever saw upon a human face.”

“Perhaps he thought yours a little too cold at the time.”

“I do not know. I always feel afraid of him. Did you hear what Aunt Herbert said to-night about his marrying?”

“I heard what she said about his not marrying.”

“And what did you think?”

“The very same as I thought before. Her saying that made no change in my opinion, for I do not think she knows anything about it; I am sure he never told her.”

“Then why should she say it?”

“She may think he will not, just as I think he will. She was on a crusade against matrimony in all shapes to-night.”

“ Is it not strange, a person who has married so happily herself ? ”

“ She has most exalted notions of the husbands people ought to look for ; I doubt, Agnes, that she would think Mr. Oakley rich enough for you.”

“ She need not trouble herself about it, though I have often thought myself that, only I am so very fond of him, I would prefer a richer man. I should die if people talked of me as they do of the Edward Phillipses.”

“ There are few but would do better than they do. I suppose Mr. Oakley has more than double what they have ; Ernest told me he has 700*l.* or 800*l.* a year.”

“ Did Ernest think it enough ? ”

“ He did not say ; so far as this, he said, Mr. Oakley would never be any better off than he is now, and not being any profession.”

“ What do you say, Eva ? ”

“ I do not like giving advice in such matters ; I think people are the best judges themselves—at least, I prefer them being unhappy in their own way, not mine.”

“ I wish he had more money.”

“ Many gentlemen get situations which help their income ; now, Mr. Lennox was made auditor

of the workhouses last month, that is 400*l.* a year, and must be a respectable thing or he would not take it."

"I wonder could Mr. Oakley get that?"

"Perseverance will get most things, and he has a good acquaintance."

CHAPTER V.

OPPORTUNITY.

MR. OAKLEY did not show any symptom of an intention to leave Hislop the next day. When they went out to walk, Mrs. Herbert contrived to keep Eva a close prisoner between herself and Miss Kingsmill.

She bit her lip with mistaken satisfaction at a couple of backward glances which Eva cast at Mr. Oakley and Agnes, who were following. Edward, whose lameness hindered his joining in a long walk, contented himself with a stroll on the terrace, and Miss Boare volunteered to keep him company. If the truth must be told, he did not feel any resentment at Mrs. Herbert for constituting herself the conservator of his fair cousin, whom he was very glad to see walk away in durance vile.

The suspected lover got a hint next morning that his visit was supposed to have terminated.

At breakfast, Mrs. Herbert informed him that she would trouble him with the conveyance of a small book she wished to send to a lady in his neighbourhood. He professed his happiness to take charge of it. When he came into the drawing-room after having had a morning pipe with Edward, the book, neatly packed up and directed, was lying, in too conspicuous a manner to be overlooked, upon Mrs. Herbert's open desk. He took the parcel and the hint.

Ernest's was the next visit to be paid. Thanks to Miss Boare's strategy, Mrs. Herbert relaxed her usual duenna-like surveillance a little. The young lovers contrived to be a good deal together. Agnes, who was often with them, was too deeply engrossed by reminiscences of the last visit to pay them much attention. Edward, perhaps, was a heedful observer; at least, the scowl resettled on his brow. There was another and more amiable looker-on.

“How very fond of that sweet cousin of his Mr. Clifton seems to be,” remarked Miss Kingsmill to Miss Boare.

“I did not observe him.”

“I cannot think how you could help it. Why, his first thought on coming into the room seems to be how he can get the seat next to her.”

"They are relations, and she is always laughing and chattering, no wonder he likes listening to her."

"Can it be she is so blind, or is she only pretending?" thought Miss Kingsmill. The question was soon solved. Miss Boare said—

"Margaret, make no mention before Mrs. Herbert of any attention you may fancy you see Mr. Clifton pay Eva Desmond. She has peculiar notions on that subject, and you might make mischief between her and her niece."

"I will not interfere, you may be sure; the wonder to me is that she does not see it herself."

After her cousin's departure Eva received a note from Mrs. Bloomfield inviting her to Ash Park for a week, and promising the carriage should meet her at the Brackley station. Mrs. Herbert was not altogether pleased at Eva's being the only one invited, but she made no objection to her going. Eva found it very pleasant. The house was full; many people from a distance, strangers to Eva. Mr. Oakley, who was there for two days, was very kind and attentive to her, which, added to great good-nature from Mrs. Bloomfield, made her

feel quite at home. Then came Ernest Clifton for two days: Mrs. Bloomfield, seeing the cousins enjoyed being together, invited him to remain a third—a great happiness to both the young ones. Three whole days together, and no one to mar their sport! Love can make woeful progress in three days of unchecked intercourse. Ernest visited some sick in that part of his parish which lay contiguous to Ash Park, every morning, the only time he was ever absent from Eva's side; and Eva would sit in the window and watch that splendid figure out of sight, and long before it was time for its return, would be stationed there again, and to her mind, no sunshine ever illumined a path as did his returning shadow.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HEIRESS.

THE Christmas holidays were approaching when Eva returned from Ash Park. Mr. Herbert left home to escort his ward from school, she always spending her holidays at Hislop.

Clara Neville was the daughter of a half-sister of Mr. Herbert's considerably younger than himself. His father had been twice married, the second time to a lady of very large fortune; but as no gold is without its alloy, hers contained the awful drawback of being accumulations from lunatic relations. Her grandfather had been a madman. Her brother died in an asylum; his wealth devolved upon his sister, whom the elder Mr. Herbert married. She died after the birth of her second child, without any symptoms of the malady appearing in her own person, but at an early age they began to develope themselves in her son, the elder child. They confirmed as he grew older, thus annihilating all hope of

his outgrowing the hereditary scourge. At the time we are writing of he was under restraint in London. His sister, who was a very nice and handsome girl, had married into a family, less afflicted, indeed, than her own, yet containing a vein of imbecility which ran through all its members, more or less affecting them. In some, its existence could scarcely be more than traced, while in others it developed itself strongly; for instance, whilst the Mr. Neville, who married Miss Herbert, possessed it in so slight a degree, that had he belonged to a family where no such idiopathy existed, his intellect might have passed at a low average; his only brother was little removed from cretinism. Clara Neville's mother died in her first confinement. If any irregularity of mind appeared in her last days it was attributed to the delirium of fever. Clara's father fell a victim to consumption after a tedious illness of more than five years' continuance. He left his little girl, who had just reached the age of ten years, with her large possessions and still larger expectations, to the sole guardianship of her step-uncle, Mr. Herbert of Hislop, from whom some of the expectations might naturally be said to exist, as, though the disposal of his property

lay in his own power, Clara was his direct heir after her lunatic uncle.

What description of intellect this admixture of lunacy with imbecility had produced, was, as yet, a problem unsolved. The lining of Clara's head seemed to baffle conjecture ; and, notwithstanding the pains which had been taken to arrive at a conclusion, she had attained the age of twenty without any one having been able to pronounce whether she was wise or foolish. She rarely, if ever, spoke—never unless addressed—but if you asked her a question, she gave a ready answer, straightforward and to the purpose. She never hazarded an impromptu remark, thereby giving indication that mind was at work within ; never, even as a child, could progressive reason be tracked by the footmarks of inquiry. Nor might it be guessed by the brightening smile and joyous exclamation, or the overshadowed face and depressed manner, whether she participated in the feelings of joy and sorrow instinctive to human nature, or whether she remained in inane indifference ; across that stolid countenance beamed no rays and swept no clouds. Sometimes, but very rarely, and then more as if she conceived it was expected from her than from any impulse of

sensation, she smiled a grim smile. It was the grimmest smile imaginable, seeming to curve the lips downwards instead of upwards, and making the heavy face look still more uninteresting in that ghastly ghost of a murdered smile.

Clara had attained at school the ordinary acquirements of a mediocre intellect. Slowly and by degrees, and with great trouble to the teacher, she had been made to acquire, in addition to a plain English education, some knowledge of music and drawing: knowledge of it is not a just expression, it was merely execution. For instance, she could play some tolerably difficult pieces of music, very passably; but set her down to learn the simplest waltz by herself, and she could no more master it than she could fly. She knew the notes, could put her fingers on them, but all else must be done by the teacher; at the expense of great wear and tear of himself, in time, he would succeed in putting the piece into both head and hands; from thenceforward she could play it correctly. In consequence of the slow progress of her education, Mr. Herbert had wisely determined to keep her at school long after the time usual for girls to remain there, at all events, until she became of age. Mrs. Herbert encouraged this plan. She

did not look forward with much pleasure' to the prospect of having Clara for a companion, and she knew that until she married, her uncle would not be willing for her to be thrown, with her large possessions and dubious intellect, from under his protection. He seemed to have a kind of affection for Clara. People often have for those of their family who are very wealthy, however incapable of inspiring such a feeling they may be in themselves. Large tracts of land belonged, or would belong, to Clara, and to Mr. Herbert, in his capacity of supervisor of them, was attached a good deal of influence and importance: this would continue as long as Clara remained with him, and people are very tenacious of parting with power and authority, even though it be but delegated. He expected, too, to have the disposing of her hand. These things combined induced a liking for the individual with whom they were connected, and Mr. Herbert evidently entertained a liking for his niece. That he should extol her capabilities, exaggerate her acquirements, and uphold her with deferential attention before company, was policy; but that he should draw her on his knee and talk caressingly to her in private, as he often did, showed affection. It is to be supposed that

Clara returned this affection, for sometimes on these occasions, she smiled her grim smile.

A short time before the young heiress, whose peculiarities we have been endeavouring to describe, was expected to arrive at Hislop, Mr. Herbert informed Eva, who had not seen her for years, that she would not find her much altered, but he had no doubt companionship with Eva would do much towards improving and bringing her forward. He went on to talk of Clara's extreme shyness and susceptibility of raillery or ridicule—her being fully aware that she was not as quick and bright as many were. Eva thought if this account were true she must be a good deal altered from what she had known her; and moreover, she was too bright herself not to understand that she was expected to keep her brightness off the new guest. She also received a hint from Mrs. Herbert that it would be a gratification to her uncle if she would make a companion of Clara, encourage her to talk and to pursue her avocations with her, and help to ripen the sluggish intellect with stray beams from the radiance of her own. This, Eva, who never grudged a helping hand to any one who needed it, readily promised to do.

It was a bitter cold night, just one week before Christmas, the curtains were drawn, the tea-table spread, a blazing fire was in the grate, beside which Mrs. Herbert sat, and Eva at the sofa table was busy at her work, when the sound of carriage-wheels grated on the gravel without. A moment after, Mr. Herbert, nothing but his eyes visible above the numerous folds of the immense muffler which was twisted not only round his neck but his head, ushered in his charge. Mrs. Herbert kissed her coldly. Eva advanced with an extended hand.

“ You recollect me, Clara, I dare say, although you have outgrown my memory,” she said, with a soft, kind smile.

The new arrival laid her thin straight fingers on the held-out palm, but did not speak.

“ You recollect Eva Desmond, don’t you, Clara?” said her aunt.

“ Yes.”

“ It is five years since we have met, I think,” said Eva.

No answer.

“ How long is it, Clara? do you remember?” said Mrs. Herbert.

“ Just five years.”

“A different climate this to what we have been enjoying outside,” said Mr. Herbert, cheerily, as in front of the blazing fire he uncoiled the folds of his muffler. “Clara, dear, ring the bell, till I get off these tight boots and a comfortable pair of slippers on. Here is your old uncle turning himself into a dandy to make a becoming escort for you.”

Clara smiled, and Eva thought she had never seen anything so grim in gravity, as that smile.

“Don’t look saucy at me, miss; take off some of those half-dozen wraps of yours, and let us see you. Miss Starch must think you are a very precious piece of goods when she rolled you up so carefully. And Rebecca, we won’t take tea amiss. I hope you have something a little bit substantial, for we hardly got fair play at the dinner. Trains don’t admit of a hearty feast.”

“Where did you dine?”

“Where was it, Clara? You recollect everything.”

“Birmingham.”

“Ah, Birmingham, so it was. Just ten minutes to bolt down what you can. I made at a sirloin of beef—thought there was the least delay at it:

I managed to gulp down a good bit. Didn't you, Clara?"

"Yes."

"But not so much, says that roguish look, but that you can do justice to the tea. I am pretty sharp set too. Ah, here it comes. What's to be had? chops and scalloped oysters: very good. Come, Clara."

He rubbed his hands and set to in good earnest; chop after chop disappeared.

"I am rough casting on the chops," he said, laughingly, "my appetite has not come down to scalloped oysters yet. Hodson, bring in another plate of bread and butter. Tell the cook not to cut it too thick: I like it thin, but let us have plenty of it; and, Hodson, some more buttered toast. Rebecca, I'll thank you for another cup of tea."

"La, Edward, you have had three!"

"No matter, I must have another; Christmas times we must not starve—eh, Clara? Why don't you talk, you little puss? Let us hear the sound of your voice. Here's an Irish girl can talk enough for you and herself."

Clara did not speak; she attempted her smile; but it was but an attempt, the smile did not come

off, and the abortion was very unimproving to her countenance. Eva smiled, but it was at her own thoughts. She was thinking 'if the Bishop of Salisbury were to look in!' She was seated opposite to Clara at the tea-table. Though prepared beforehand not to look for much improvement in her, she was surprised to see how very little there had been. Clara had scarcely grown at all since she had last seen her, and was considerably under the middle height, which, with her unformed figure and inexpressive face, gave her the appearance of being much younger than she really was—rather a fortunate circumstance for her. Her figure was spare and stiff, possessing none of the lithe gracefulness of childhood, nor yet womanly development. Her face was very plain. The absence of all expression of life or sagacity would have made any face plain, but her features were bad: a dull eye of watery blue which never deepened with a thought or flashed with a beam, a thick flat nose, and thin straight lips, round which never played a smile (Clara's smile was too grim for play.) Her hair was of an ugly leaden colour, and she possessed a most unfortunate skin: a skin, which, had it done its best, would have been but of a dark muddy

hue, but by a cutaneous disorder, to which Clara had been subject from her birth, it was now so discoloured that it would have been hard to tell what the original was. Her face was all over blotches, in various stages of progress; some were but the scaly, purple marks of extinct volcanoes, some were swollen and angry, with yellow heads announcing their near approach to culmination, in some places only a glazed redness portended the embryo eruption. On the lower half of her nose, in particular, these nuisances appeared to delight in accumulating, and on its dark red ground the yellow festering spots showed to such—advantage, I was going to write, when some philological demon suggested—disadvantage, that when one's eye accidentally lighted upon it, the first sensation was to whisk it off again, and look for a more agreeable resting place.

Well, if she has money she wants it! I would rather be as I am, was Eva's reflection when she went to her room that night. Her next thought—a close following one—was that she was glad Clara Neville was not a beauty. She was to stay at Hislop for six weeks; Ernest Clifton would be often there, and Eva felt it would be just as pleasant not to have a companion whose attractions

could be balanced in the scale with her own, when such a heavy makeweight as Clara's possessions would have to be afterwards added. There seemed no fear now.

“Bless me, Eva, what a face she has!” was Ernest's private exclamation when he next came to Hislop. “From what I heard, I expected to see her very bad, but I did not think she could be as bad as she is.”

“She will be very rich,” replied Eva, thoughtfully.

“Ay, God is good. He distributes his blessings more evenly than we imagine.”

CHAPTER VII.

THE INQUISITOR.

EVÀ was not unmindful of her uncle's wishes ; she bestowed a kindly notice on his ward, which few who were in the habit of staying with her at Hislop ever took the trouble of doing. She conversed with her on subjects which she believed to be within the range of her understanding, contented with the monosyllabic answers she received ; showed her her things ; employed herself with her in the house, walked with her out of doors ; often felt tired of her, it is true, yet never suffered it to appear. The time passed more pleasantly to Clara than it had ever done before at Hislop, though she only showed her appreciation of it by the tenacity with which she stuck to Eva's side.

“ You are bringing the ‘old man of the sea’ on us, Eva, by your civility to that outlandish girl,” was Ernest's rather pettish remark. “ One cannot stir but she is after them, and she comes with

such a stealthy cat-like step, one does not know she is there until they turn round and see her."

"People ought to be well-behaved at all times," said Eva, archly.

"Do you encourage her to annoy me?" asked Ernest, gravely.

"Annoy you, Ernest! you know I would not. But Uncle Herbert is not pleased unless she is noticed; and by having her with us, you know, we often get out without Aunt Herbert. You need not mind her: just say a word now and then, not to let her feel we shut her out, and that is all she will want."

This latter injunction Eva often had to remind him of when they were out walking together, and once, when they accomplished a few contraband minutes in the passage, while they were believed to be dressing for dinner, she laughingly told him he had three times informed Clara, during their walk that morning, that the road was very dirty, a fact she had each time succinctly acquiesced in. Ernest joined in the laugh against himself, though he shook his head and called Eva satirical.

"Eva, my dear, do you think your aunt at all remarks this partiality of your cousin's for you?"

asked Miss Boare one day. Eva cringed up like the leaves of the sensitive plant at this down-right question. Miss Boare did not possess the knack of touching tenderly on delicate subjects.

“I think not,” replied Eva faintly.

“I cannot think how any one who has been accustomed to see him with other girls can help it,” continued the little woman; “he is so very different; and it has continued so long now—continually coming up twenty miles: she must know he would never do it without some inducement; I am sure she must.”

“She thinks people like to come here; I do not think she imagines he comes to see me, because she does not do anything to prevent his visits, and not more to keep us asunder than she does with every one.”

“I know she is very antagonistic to such matters, but in this instance, perhaps the charm of having you settled so near her, and with such an excellent young man, may weigh with her.”

“I do not think you know her as well as I do,” replied Eva.

“Has Mr. Clifton proposed to yourself yet?”

Eva’s face grew crimson. She felt as sore as if she had been beaten. But, thought she, one

must not look for delicacy of feeling where there is none; so she answered, without any appearance of annoyance.

“No.”

“Then, my dear, I think he is doing exceedingly wrong.”

“Wrong?”

“Yes, I think when he has been paying you such marked attention for so long a time he has every right to make his intentions known.”

“Perhaps he has none,” said Eva, in a low voice.

“You do not think that, Eva; if you did, you would be just as wrong to allow his attention. But he really should declare what he means to do; not keep a girl in suspense in this way. Shall I speak to him?”

“No, no! dear Miss Boare, pray do not. I would not for the whole world. Ernest himself would not like. No, no; do not do that!” The very notion of Ernest’s proud, shy, sensitive nature under the probe of Miss Boare’s indelicate interference terrified Eva. She could not rest until she extracted a promise from her not even to mention her name to Ernest.

“Well, my dear, as you dislike it so much I will not; but I must say I think you very foolish. He

might put on his hat and walk away and propose for another girl to-morrow, and you could not so much as ask him why he did so."

"Ernest would never do that," said Eva, indignantly.

"So all you girls think when you are in love with a man; how often has it been done? Take your own way, but you know my opinion; that you are very foolish."

"Better be thought foolish, or anything than indecent," thought Eva.

"Bless me, here is Mr. Oakley," exclaimed Miss Boare, as that gentleman passed the window, walking.

He said when he came in that he was on a visit at a house about a mile distant, and had walked over to see Mrs. Herbert. After a little while, Miss Boare left the room, saying she would go look for the lady of the house. As she did so she met Clara Neville coming in.

Mrs. Herbert was in her maid's work room. It was the hour of the servants' dinner, so Miss Boare found her alone.

"Mr. Oakley is in the drawing-room," said she.

"Mr. Oakley! What can bring him here?" exclaimed Mrs. Herbert.

“ To see you, he says,” said the traitress with an incredulous smile.

“ See me ! Stuff ! Who is there ? ”

“ Eva and I were there when he came in. I thought I could be spared, and said I would go look for you ; but just as I went out Clara came in, so the young people had not the benefit of my good-nature.”

“ I think it was very strange of you wishing to leave them together.”

“ Why should I not ? ”

“ Why should you ? You know I do not want to encourage Mr. Oakley here.”

“ Do you suppose Eva really likes him ? ” asked the cunning little woman.

“ I do not know whether she does or not. It was she who proposed to have him asked here that time, and I was foolish enough to do it. I will not be so taken in again.” She hurried down to the drawing-room, looking a very good personification of a spoil-sport.

Eva, with a deepened colour and brightened smile, was looking up in Charles Oakley’s face as he stood by her side. He stopped speaking as Mrs. Herbert entered, so she did not know what he was saying. He was giving Eva an account of a success-

ful mediation of Ernest Clifton's between two belligerent powers in his parish. The particulars of the quarrel Eva had already known from Ernest, and it had been her suggestion that he should endeavour to adjust it.

Mr. Oakley's visit was a long one. Twice Mrs. Herbert looked at her watch. Once she remarked it was getting late. Charles could not always be taking hints; he had taken one the last time he was there. The only notice he took of the time was to say he supposed Mr. Herbert would soon be in.

“I do not expect him home till dinner-time,” said his wife.

“Where is he gone?”

“I really do not know where he is; somewhere about the parish, I fancy. There has been a wagoner hurt, I should not wonder if he has gone to see him; or he may be at the school. Mr. Herbert has built a school-house for this parish lately: he was not satisfied at having it without one, and as he could get no funds from any place, he has built it out of his own pocket—rather an expensive piece of business.”

“I think Mr. Herbert rode out,” said Miss Boare; “I saw his horse saddled in the yard.”

"He generally rides to the distant parts of the parish," said Mrs. Herbert drily.

"Here is my uncle coming up the drive!" said Eva, who had gone to the window. Charles Oakley followed her.

"Ha! Oakley, you here!" hallooed out the parson as soon as he caught sight of him. "Ring, Eva, for Hodson to take my horse. I don't know how I missed you, Oakley," continued he as he came into the room and shook his visitor heartily by the hand. "Did you come through the town?"

"No, I came from Heathlawn."

"I thought I could hardly help seeing you if you were in Gelston. I have been knocking about the town with one and another all day, picking up what news I could. You are come to stop, I hope, Oakley? a volunteer is worth two pressed men any day."

"Well, since you are so good I will stay dinner. They had an early dinner at Heathlawn to-day. They have taken the young ones to see this travelling menagerie which has come to Gelston. I never can manage to dine at one o'clock, so Mrs. Heath ordered a chop for me at six. However, as no one will be there, I am very glad of your offer."

“ And we are very glad of your company.”

Mrs. Herbert looked vinegar itself. Miss Boare was afraid to raise her eyes lest she should laugh outright. Knowing that nothing would come of the suspected flirtation, she did not anticipate any ill effects to herself from Mrs. Herbert’s temporary annoyance. Of the other affair, of which she expected something would come, she was terrified, lest she should be discovered to have cognizance. When the *denouement* of that came to light, very slight her offence of having encouraged Mr. Oakley would appear. So the little woman chuckled within herself, and thought she had been very clever, and done both Eva and herself good service by her little ruse.

CHAPTER VIII.

HEAVING THE LEAD.

IN a moderately sized room, situated in one wing of a fine handsome house, standing in the midst of a fine handsome park, about twenty miles from Hislop, a gentleman and his wife sat over the breakfast table. The meal was over, but had not been removed. That several persons had been partaking of it was evident from the number of plates ranged round the table, and the corresponding number of chairs, pushed slightly and irregularly back, as vacated chairs always are after meals. Both the lady and gentleman who were now the only occupants of the room, were past middle age, that is to say, the gentleman was about fifty, and his wife some few years his junior. Both were well looking, but there were lines of care upon the face of the former which gave him a worn and jaded look.

“ And so, my dear, Chewton is really coming home ? ” he said, looking up from a little roll of dough he had expended some labour in forming of the bread-crumbs on the tablecloth, and addressing his wife, who had an open letter in her hand.

“ Yes ; he says he shall sail in the next mail steamer, and he hopes we shall have a wife looked out for him, as he shall barely have time to woo and wed before he must return to Canada.”

“ There is no use Chewton thinking of marrying any one without a good deal of money,” replied his father. “ How else is he to pay off the heavy encumbrances I must leave on the estate for younger children.”

“ I think Chewton would like to have money, any way,” replied Chewton’s mother.

“ Who is there ? ”

“ There are the Spears, they will have 25,000*l.* each.”

“ Ay, if old Spears does not marry again, but who could trust him ? If he had a son they would not have a penny.”

“ Miss Child.”

“ She is too old for Chewton. I wonder what

kind of a being that hundredth cousin of ours, Clara Neville, is ? ”

“ I do not know ; I never saw her. I have heard she is very odd and plain.”

“ Never mind the beauty, so that she is not mad. She will have a great deal of money : a long minority, great savings : and she must have what belongs to that mad uncle of hers. I should think she would have old Herbert’s of Hislop, too ; he has no other heir.”

“ Still, what would wealth be if she should go out of her mind ? ”

“ I wish we could see her, and judge for ourselves. She spends her holidays at Hislop, I have heard.”

“ Yes, I should think she was there now.”

“ Suppose we write and ask her here—eh, Alice ? ”

“ Do as you like, love ; but do you think they won’t suspect ? At all events, you had better write ; I know the Herberts so little.”

“ Yes, I will write. No fear but they will come ; Mrs. Herbert likes cottoning to those she thinks something better than herself. I will draw it mild with them. They ’ll never suspect what I am at.”

He left the room, and in a short time after entered the housekeeper's room, where Mrs. Deane was giving her orders for the day, with an unfolded sheet of note paper in his hand.

“Here, my love; see, will this do?”

She glanced over the note. It ran thus:

“MY DEAR MR. HERBERT,

The consecration of Westbury Church being fixed for the 9th instant, it is expected a great crowd will assemble, and I think it but fair that the houses in the neighbourhood should try to accommodate their distant friends. Therefore, Mrs. Deane joins me in hoping that you and Mrs. Herbert will give us the pleasure of your company at Deane Hall on the 8th instant, and remain with us until the 11th. Should my young cousin, Clara Neville, happen to be with you, we shall be very happy to make her acquaintance, if you will allow her to accompany you. With Mrs. Deane's kind regards for Mrs. Herbert—I remain

“Yours very truly

“J. N. DEANE.”

“That will do very nicely, I think, dear,” said

Mrs. Deane, giving it back to him. "It was a good thought about the consecration."

Her husband gave her a knowing look.

When this note arrived at Hislop, there was a council held thereon, at which neither of the young ladies was permitted to be present, nor was that arch-traitor, Miss Boare.

"I wonder had we better take Clara?" said Mrs. Herbert, doubtfully.

"Oh, I think so, as she is asked," replied her husband. "It is well for her to be introduced to these people, their position is very good; and you see, by the way Mr. Deane mentions her, he recognises the relationship."

"Her appearance is so very unpresentable."

"That is their affair as much as ours; she is related to both. She is not likely to change for the better, so perhaps it is as well for people to get used to her."

"It was well Eva was not invited; Clara never looks so badly as when beside her."

"I suppose you will leave her here with Miss Boare."

"Indeed, I shall do no such thing. Have Charles Oakley here every day while we are out?"

“ What will you do with them ? ”

“ Miss Boare must return to Mowbray.”

“ And Eva, I suppose, go with her ? ”

“ No. Miss Boare seems to have got some ridiculous notion of encouraging Charles Oakley in her head. I think I shall send Eva down to Oakstone. She will like it herself, and I am sure it will be such a treat to the girls that my brother will not object to sending the carriage for her to the half-way house.”

“ And we can drop her there, our road lies so far together. A very good plan; though I don’t myself see that Charles Oakley is to be objected to. He will be comfortably off, though not affluent.”

“ We have relations enough in this neighbourhood without collecting any more,” was the reply.

Perhaps one small glimpse into the blue chamber of Mrs. Herbert’s mind ought to be allowed the reader, to account for the unnatural influence she exerted to prevent Eva’s condition being changed. See expected to outlive her husband. Don’t be frightened, reader;—the days of removing such obnoxious encumbrances as husbands and wives by the aid of strychnine or arsenic had not

arrived at the time we write of, nor did Mrs. Herbert at all wish to lose her husband ; on the contrary, she had a great desire that he should live ; but she was too fond of herself not to calculate the future, and too acute not to be aware that, in all human probability, she should survive him. She was naturally of a longer lived habit, which she had never treated injudiciously, as he had done ; and she was younger. She could not bear the thoughts of living alone. Of all the companions she had ever had staying with her, Eva was the one which suited her best, and if she remained unmarried there was not likely to be any obstacle to her coming to take up her residence with her aunt, more especially as, in the event of her father's death, she would be in very indigent circumstances. Some may, perhaps, wonder how Mrs. Herbert could contemplate the gladsome young beauty, and destine such a future for her, but those are people who are differently constituted to Mrs. Herbert.

The arrangements of the visit being made known, both the young ladies were pleased ; at least Clara answered "Yes" to the inquiry, and Eva thanked with many smiles. A contraband billet was despatched to Ernest with the intelligence, and

Mrs. Herbert wrote to Agnes to propose her plan, which was gladly acceded to. It was on the day after Mr. Oakley had dined at Hislop that all this took place. He called again that evening; the ladies had just returned from walking, and Clara and Eva had happened to linger outside the door after the elder ladies had gone into the house. They were still there when Mr. Oakley came up. Eva seized the opportunity of giving Agnes a help; and getting rid of Clara for a moment, she asked him if he had been lately at Oakstone.

“No,” he replied; “Ernest and I have been talking about it; I wanted to call there, and he said I had better come down with him and stay the night.”

“Oh, I hope you will, I am going there next week. Perhaps we shall meet.”

“What day do you go?”

“On the 8th if I go at all. It is not quite settled, as we do not know yet whether they can come to meet me.”

“Then your uncle and aunt don’t go?”

“No they are all going to Deane Hall on that day.”

“I did not know they visited.”

“They were not used, but it seems they are

relations of Clara's and Mr. Deane has written to ask her and my uncle and aunt."

"How people root after relations with money. Were you not asked?"

"No; I do not suppose they knew I was in existence. I have no money to make any one root me out," she answered, laughing.

"You have what is far better," he said admiringly.

"And I am to do what I like far better; go to Oakstone. I dare say I shall see you there."

"I must talk to Ernest about it. I shall hear from him if you go."

"Yes. But you and he can go at any rate."

"I suppose so."

"I think it was just as well I settled not to leave Eva here while we were away," remarked Mrs. Herbert to her husband, after this second visit from Mr. Oakley. To Eva she said. "You can only take a small carpet bag to Oakstone, Eva. I am going to take my velvet dress, and that takes one imperial to itself; I must try and let Clara's things be put with mine in the other; she cannot take much, for I want to take a variety of dress to Deane Hall, and there will not be room."

Troubles such as these sat lightly on Eva. She put up as few things as she could manage to do with, rolled up a soft evening dress that did not easily crumple, and laid it in the mouth of the carpet bag. Her best morning dress she put on, and felt as happy as if the two imperials were groaning with her finery.

When they drew up at the half-way house, Ernest Clifton came from it to the door of the brougham.

“ You here, Ernest ! What brings you here ? ” said his aunt.

“ I had a letter from home saying the phaeton would be here, and if I liked to go down it should return through Hilton. As that would be putting a much longer journey on the horse, I walked over here to meet it.”

“ Why it would be just as short for you to have walked straight to Oakstone.”

“ No, would it ? ”

“ The same thing. This is ten miles from Hilton, and Hilton is ten miles from Oakstone.”

“ I did not think of that.”

“ I wonder you did not,” said Mrs. Herbert with a satirical laugh.

“ Are you coming out, Eva ? We are detaining

the carriage. He handed her out; looking not quite himself.

“Hard for a poor fellow to give a trip without Aunt Herbert catching him,” he said, as the carriage drove on. “I wish she would mind her own business. Come into the house, love, and tell me how you have been this long time.”

“Not so very long, Ernest.”

“All time seems long that I do not see you.”

He drew her hand through his arm, and led her into the house. They sat down together in the little homely parlour, while they waited for the horse to be rested and fed, and time did not seem long then.

That was a happy drive, though not a very rapid one, that drive to Oakstone. The reins were often on the horse’s neck, and once or twice the servant behind thought it necessary to let his young master know that other vehicles were coming, and there was risk of a collision.

“Who would have thought of any contrivance of Aunt Herbert’s effecting such a pleasant jaunt for us,” said Eva, looking up with her angel smile in the face her cousin was bending over her.

“Who would indeed!” Here Murray’s hand was laid on the reins; the horse had gone so near the

road hedge, in another moment the wheels would have been on one of those large stones which are placed to prevent wagons cutting down the sides of the road. They regained the centre of the road, and neither of the two in front were any the wiser.

“There are others going to be happy besides us, love; Charles Oakley comes down to-morrow.”

“He told me he would come; I am so glad.”

“So was I. The proposal came quite from himself. He wanted to drive me down to-day, but I had other fish to fry, so we settled he should follow to-morrow.”

“Does Agnes know?”

“No, I thought I would leave to you the pleasure of telling the news. Look up, and thank me Eva.”

“Mind, Mr. Ernest! The coach will be over you, sir!”

CHAPTER IX.

THE KEY-NOTE.

OUR fate is a strange thing ! how little seems to mar or make it ! Some adventitious circumstance will occur and leave its traces on a life track ! As how trifling a looker-on will regard that circumstance—will we ourselves do so ; yet, with what import is it fraught for us ! How often is human judgment quite at fault, and human foresight a thing of naught,—the event our sagacity has most dreaded, the powers of our intellect been most taxed to avert, is the one in whose hidden train our road of fortune has lain. Often, the hope we have encouraged as brightest, has, when attained, been found to fail us, and we discover too late that what we deemed a stepping-stone, was, in effect, a stumbling-block.

Visiting at Deane Hall at the same time as the Herberts, was a Mrs. Norreys, who resided near Hilton, a little, busy, talkative woman, who was

always chattering and gossiping. After dinner, on the day of the consecration, she happened to be seated beside Mrs. Herbert on the sofa, and forthwith began to talk to her about her nephew, "our new parson at Hilton," as she called him.

"I understand Ernest is very much liked," said his aunt stiffly.

"Yes indeed, he is, and deservedly. He is sensible and moderate, and very painstaking. Handsome enough to break all the young ladies' hearts, only they know it would be no use for them, as he is engaged."

"Ernest engaged! and to whom?"

"Ah, my dear Mrs. Herbert, that won't do! though you do affect surprise very well."

"I never affect anything, Mrs. Norreys," said Mrs. Herbert, bridling. "You appear to know more than I do."

"I did not think that. I was on the point of asking you when we were to expect the bride."

"I have never heard there was going to be one."

"I wonder what takes him to Hislop so often?" said the little busybody, archly, "Not your niece, I suppose."

“ Which niece ? ” asked Mr. Herbert, whose attention the conversation had attracted.

“ Why, that beautiful Miss Desmond, to be sure. Do you think people don’t use their eyesight ? ”

“ They have seen double this time,” said Mrs. Herbert, coldly ; “ there is nothing of the kind between Mr. Clifton and Miss Desmond.”

“ Did you ever ask them ? ” asked the little woman, who was now on her mettle.

“ No indeed, I did not. I never spoke about such a foolish thing.”

“ Others have been foolish enough to speak about it, then. The good people of Hilton are too lynx-eyed to let their handsome young parson slip away from them without remarking it. Do you happen to know whether he went down to Oakstone yesterday or not ? a little bird told me he was to get there by a very circuitous route. Do you know did he ? ”

Mrs. Herbert felt very provoked at the question, and very angry at the manner in which it was put. She answered shortly—

“ He drove Miss Desmond down there yesterday.”

“ Ah ! I see we do know a little about it. Indeed, Mrs. Herbert, you might tell us when it is to be ;

we are all friends here, and will not name it until it is public: though it is pretty public too; Mr. Griffin told me last week he did not know the day Mr. Clifton might require the parsonage fitted up. Do tell us, that's a dear Mrs. Herbert."

"Mrs. Norreys, I can only repeat that I have nothing to tell. I know nothing whatever about it."

"Mr. Griffin need not mind fitting up the parsonage yet," said Mr. Herbert, with a smile.

"Well, I am sorry to hear it. I hoped it would be soon. I have seen Miss Desinond once or twice: she would be an acquisition to any neighbourhood."

A high conclave Mr. and Mrs. Herbert held in bed that night. Evidence was collected: there was a great deal once they began to collect it. The keystone of suspicion once laid, it is wonderful how quickly the edifice is reared. Each thought they had been very stupid. They felt angry with the young people for having outwitted them. Counter mines were planned and trains laid. No matter whether two hearts were shivered in the explosion.

Clara Neville did not pass muster with eclât at Deane Hall.

“I really think she is too bad,” said Mrs. Deane to her husband, when the curtains had tightly enclosed them within six square feet of space.

“Herbert was telling me what she will have, to-day. She will have an immense property.”

“That is if the foolish Mr. Neville does not marry.”

“I do not fancy he ever will. No one above a kitchen-maid would take him.”

“Her other uncle is nearly as good a life as her own. I hear he is a strong powerful man.”

“Any way, the children would have his property when he died.”

“Did Mr. Herbert say anything about his own property?”

“Not a word. As close as wax upon that point.”

“I do not think Chewton could ever be happy with her. Such a mortification to a man to have a wife like that.”

“She has a most unfortunate face, certainly, unless he could get used to it.”

“And such a manner—if you can call it manner.

She is almost like a thing that was not right. I do not think there is any use following it up, dear. I could not wish to see Chewton married to her."

"Leaving the children only 2,000*l.* a piece will put 20,000*l.* on this estate," said Mr. Deane, with a harassed sigh.

"We will look about for some one else," replied his wife. "If we cannot get any one, why we have this precious commodity to fall back on. No fear of her being carried off, I fancy. Go to sleep now, love, you will only be jaded tomorrow."

CHAPTER X.

THE TUNE TAKEN UP.

THREE happy days passed, as happy days always do, very quickly at Oakstone. Mr. Oakley arrived the day after Eva had come, according to his arrangement with Ernest. He seemed very attentive to Agnes, who consequently was very gay and happy. Ernest and Eva were never asunder. Side by side, they seemed never tired of interchanging thought. Every little incident in the life of each afforded subject of interest between them; trifles too light and insignificant to be even mentioned to others with whom there was less unison of feeling, were dwelt over by them. Sometimes—true betrayal of conscious love—as they neared the house, after a long walk, Eva would fall back to Mr. Oakley's side, whilst Ernest would seek his sister's, and thus they would return, differently coupled to what they had been during the walk.

“Even at the risk of wearing out my welcome, I shall come up to Hislop soon,” said Ernest on the morning Eva was to leave. “You have much to answer for, Eva; I find I cannot live long without seeing you: I get discontented and low-spirited, and unfit for work. I am always wondering what you are doing, and longing to see you at it. And when things go cross with me, which they often do, I always think if you were near, you would contrive to put some pleasant aspect on them, or would say some soft and soothing thing that would extract half the bitterness from my feelings.”

“Dear Ernest, you must not take trifling crosses to heart. They are the lot of every human being.”

“A superabundant share falls to the lot of a clergyman placed in a stronghold of dissent like Hilton. I cannot tell you how I am sometimes worried.”

“Poor Ernest! But do you think it is well to let these dissenters know that have the power of worrying you so much?”

“I do not: I never let them know it. But I feel as keenly as most men, though I do not outwardly show it. My grand resource when I am

vexed is to write to you, my greatest comforter your answer. But when these wise, gentle, and soothing letters come, they make me long that the writer was there also. Sometimes I quite wish that the time for your visit here was come, as then I could see so much of you; and again, I think how that is to be the end of your visit to England, and wish it postponed. I nearly forgot. When I was in Salisbury I saw a little ring that took my fancy and I bought it for you. Where is your hand? Just a fit, is it not?"

"Yes, it fits very nicely. What a pretty ring! Emeralds, my favourite stone. How can I thank you for this, Ernest?"

"I will tell you sometime. Here is my father coming; put on your glove."

Mr. Clifton joined them. He was coming from the stables.

"Ernest," he said, "I think you had better accept Charles Oakley's offer to drive you to Hilton to-day. You have been absent a good bit now."

"Just as you like, sir; but do you not think it would be my better plan to go with Eva to the half-way house? My visiting to-day lies between that and Hilton, and by going there I

should only have to walk the one way. There are sick in two cottages not ten minutes' walk from the half-way house. What do you think, sir?"

"Oh, very good: if you have to go there. It will be well for Eva to have your company, for I think the day too cold for the girls to go so long a drive, and have to wait, very likely, in a cold parlour, for the horse to rest. You had better start in time."

"Twelve o'clock we were thinking of, sir."

"That is rather late. You had better go at half-past eleven."

"Very well, sir. Can you be ready, Eva?"

"I am ready at any time. I packed my carpet-bag before breakfast."

"I was wondering, last night, how you brought your dress, for I heard you say you had nothing but a carpet-bag."

"The dress came in it."

"You would make a good soldier's wife, Eva." She tossed her head slightly.

"No, I shouldn't!"

"Ernest, Mr. Oakley wants you in the house; something about fishing tackle, I think," said Agnes, coming up to them. "Dear Eva," she

continued, slipping her arm round her cousin's waist when he left them, and drawing her to walk round the garden with her; "the worst of these meetings is they must have a end."

"Is it the end of *my* visit you are lamenting to-day, Agnes?" said her companion, with an arch look.

"Yes, in very truth," replied the young girl, earnestly, "your visits are among the greatest pleasures of my life. I cannot tell you with what gladness I look forward to them. On the morning you are expected I always awake with a feeling that something bright and joyous is in store for that day, even before I am conscious what it is. I have felt happier since you have been in the country than I thought I should ever do again."

Eva gently pressed her own hand on the one round her waist,

"I hope I shall leave the elements of happiness for you behind me when I am gone away for good."

"Do not talk of going away for good, dear Eva. You know you are to pay us a long visit before then."

"A long one?"

"Yes, a very long one. We shall not let you

away in a hurry, once we have you. And we shall see a great deal of Ernest when you are here."

"And of some one else."

"Perhaps. When will you come?"

"Soon now: I have been a long time from home. I did not like leaving my mother for so long, but she wrote continually to urge my remaining: she likes my being among her family since they are kind enough to wish it, and —" She coloured slightly and stopped.

"I wish you would marry and settle here," said her cousin.

The blush deepened. What was Agnes alluding to? It had often been subject of conjecture to Eva whether this favourite sister divined her brother's secret. Sometimes she thought she did, and was encouraging it; sometimes she thought the encouragement so ardent it must be done in ignorance: would Agnes be willing to relinquish her darling scheme of the heiress for her sake? After one or two schoolings of her voice, she said—

"How near to you would you like me to settle?"

"Oh, very near; you could not be too near.

Mr. Griffin is not nice enough for you, or he wants another wife, and I heard him say he would like an Irish one, they were so gay. If you had him, Eva, you would be very near ; as, how I wish you were ! You would help me so kindly, and if Ernest could meet with a rich girl he liked, I know you would help him also."

Eva's look changed.

" I should be very useful, no doubt ; but unfortunately, I do not like step-children."

Agnes was too much occupied with her own thoughts to notice that a slight shade of bitterness, very foreign to Eva in general, was on her lip and in her tone.

" Let us go in. Your father said we were to start at half-past eleven ; it must be near that now."

" If you have an opportunity during the drive, won't you, like a darling, give Ernest a hint ? "

" Hint of what ? "

" About his marrying — "

" I told you before, Agnes, I would never name the subject to him. I wish you would drop it with me."

" Why, Eva ? "

"Because I do not choose. I shall be sorry I helped any one if I am expected to go journeyman matchmaker all through the country."

"I cannot think what makes her so obstinate about not advising Ernest to marry for money," was Agnes's private reflection. "It is the only thing I ever knew her refuse to do, and she could so easily put it into his head; easier than any one, because he thinks so much of her opinion."

Thanks to old Mr. Clifton's love of arranging matters, the lovers had a whole hour to themselves at the half-way house. It was well for them they had; for, owing to Mrs. Norreys' officiousness the Herberts were in no mood for dallying for lovers' adieux. Mr. Herbert got down off the driving-seat, handed Eva into the carriage, banged the door, and resumed the reins with a rapidity that could hardly have been expected from a man of his adipose proportions, and which effectually cut off all attempt of Ernest's conveying the information that he meditated a visit to Hislop on the following week, which he had intended doing through his uncle. He had only time to say hurriedly to Mrs. Herbert as he shook hands through the window:

“I shall ask a night’s lodging at Hislop next week, aunt; I am going to pay a visit at Ash Park, and, as it is so far to return, will ask you to take me in.”

Mr. Herbert trounced the horses, and the carriage bowled away.

“What a botch Ernest is,” thought Eva. “Ash Park is four miles nearer to Hilton than to Hislop.”

And Ernest was a botch at any kind of subterfuge, for it was very novel to him.

The next morning Eva suddenly recollected something she had forgotten to mention in a letter to her mother. The bag, locked by Mrs. Herbert, had gone out to be sent to the post; Eva ran after it, and brought it back. The key was still on the table, and hastily unlocking the bag Eva shook the letters out: when one of her aunt’s, addressed to her Uncle Clifton, fell with the direction up. It caught the eye of both ladies at the same time.

“I have written to ask your uncle and Mysie to come up and pay us a visit next week,” said Mrs. Herbert, who seemed to think some explanation of the letter was necessary.

“Do you think they will come?”

“I do not know: I thought I would try them. Mr. Herbert and I talked it over last night. He thought it would do my brother good. The anniversary of poor Agnes’s death is approaching; he will feel that time particularly mournful, and both your uncle and I think coming here will rouse him.”

“Perhaps it may,” said Eva, who having added to her mother’s letter, replaced all in the bag and carried it out. She was greatly puzzled. Her aunt had not entirely deceived her—an invitation to Mr. Clifton sent in that surreptitious way boded her no good, she feared; Mrs. Herbert always talked so much of her invitations; above all, not to tell Eva of one to the Cliftons, who seemed so much to belong to her; it was very strange.

“What day do you expect Uncle Clifton, aunt?” she asked.

“I shall not expect him any day until I hear whether he comes.”

“But if he does come?”

“I desired him fix the day himself and let Ernest know, so that they could pay their visit here together.”

“I suppose she wants Uncle Clifton to see for

himself," thought Eva, "but surely he had plenty of opportunity last week."

Wednesday was the day Mr. Clifton fixed on, so Mrs. Herbert told Eva when she came to the window to ask if there were any letters for her, the morning the answer came.

"And, Eva, here is a letter from my sister, Mrs. Phillips. She has arrived unexpectedly at her son Edward's; she cannot come up here, she says, so she has written to ask me and Mr. Herbert to go down for one night to see her. Mr. Herbert is not inclined to go, he does not like their scrawly ways. Will you come with me?"

"Yes; if you wish to have company, aunt," said poor Eva, who would gladly have been excused.

"I do wish for company. I cannot bear driving with no one to talk to."

"Shall I not be in the way when we get there?"

"No; my sister says in her letter that Mr. Herbert and I shall have her room and she will go into the garret; now, I can sleep with her, and you can have the garret."

This was not exactly what Eva meant, but she did not follow it on.

“ What day are you to go, aunt ? ”

“ On Monday.”

“ That answers very well.”

“ Yes ; we shall be back to receive your uncle and Myra. Ernest writes word he will come on Monday, but that will make no difference—Mr. Herbert and Clara will be at home.”

“ On Monday ! I thought Ernest was to come the same time as his father.”

“ So I wished it, but I had a note from him to-day saying the night school on Wednesday interfered and he would come on Monday.”

Here was “a sell ! ” Eva felt very angry with her aunt for not having told her this at first. “ Yet,” thought she, “ what good would it have done me ? I could not refuse to bear her company to Brackley. If I did such a thing perhaps she would write and put Ernest off. Poor Ernest ! To come such a long way and find me gone. It is very, very vexing.” She wrote and told him all.

CHAPTER XI.

DURANCE VILE.

MONDAY came—Black Monday! Never did schoolboy start on his school-bound journey with heavier heart than did the two cousins on theirs. Eva tried her best to lecture away her disappointment, “We must not live for ourselves alone,” she argued, but feeling was hardly as submissive to argument as it ought to have been. They met Ernest on the road. The coachman drew up, Eva let down the sash next her, but Mrs. Herbert, whose bowels of compassion—if she had any—ignored all claim of Cupid’s, allowed but a very few minutes’ conversation. Eva had more need than ever of her philosophy. She tried to smile, but she felt ready to cry.

The visit to Brackley was a very comfortless one independent of any extraneous causes. Mrs. Edward Phillips absented herself entirely; she said

she was “putting things all right,” but what the things were it would be hard to tell, everything seemed to be “all wrong.” The two sisters had much that was confidential to say to each other, and Eva felt that she was in the way. Her garret was not yet prepared, she was told, having been washed out that morning and not being yet dry, so she went out into the garden. It was a bitterly cold day. Snow had fallen the night before, and the ground was so hardened by cold, it had only partially thawed on it; Eva tried to keep herself warm by walking quickly up and down the damp mossy garden walk. She was thinking of Ernest, of his cheerless visit to Hislop. He had looked disappointed when they met. She knew his face so well; it always had that enduring look when he was vexed: perhaps he had had crosses and wanted consolation. Eva forgot her own discomfort in the contemplation of his. She walked so fast she soon tired herself. The cold was so intense she could not remain out except while taking violent exercise; she went in-doors and ascended to her garret. It appeared to be an uninhabited room which they were making available for the exigency of the night. There was no fire, no carpet, no furniture, except a bedstead with four

posts, but without any roof or curtains; the bed was not yet on it; it was airing at the nursery fire. Eva took off her damp boots, and sitting down on the side of the bedstead, tried to tutor herself into feeling that it was her duty to be there, and she ought to bear it without chafing. "It is but for one day," thought she; "to-morrow we shall both be happy."

That to-morrow seemed long in coming. Eva longed to go to bed. As sleep there they must, going to bed seemed to be contributing towards hastening the advent of to-morrow, and expediting their return. It was not easy to get to bed. Edward Phillips was poring over some old black letter books and was not ready to read prayers; then, no bed-chamber candles could be got. Poor Mrs. Phillips had evidently forgotten to put them "all right."

"If there is a fire in my room, I can go to bed very well by the light of it," said Eva, rising at last in despair.

"Here, my dear, take one of these," said the dowager Mrs. Phillips, handing her one of the pair of moulds which were burning on the drawing-room table. "Your aunt and I will take the other. As to Edward and Mary, they know

the ways of the house, and must mind themselves."

Eva took it thankfully. There was no fire in the garret: it had been lighted; but had gone out from want of care. The boards felt so cold that Eva knelt on her folded shawl to say her prayers: she spread it and all the clothes she had taken off over the bed. She was young, and hope was bright at her heart; in ten minutes she was fast asleep. "I shall be with him to-day," was her first waking thought.

Many little vexatious delays retarded the meeting so anxiously looked forward to and longed for. Mrs. Herbert paid two visits on the road, and she stopped at the mantua-maker's in Gelston, to have a dress tried on; and to please Mrs. Herbert in the fit of a dress was no easy matter. I am afraid Eva was scarcely as correct as usual in detecting wrinkles, when appealed to to do so. Then Mrs. Herbert went round by the washer-woman, and paid her bill through the window of the carriage, and there was a long argument about stiffness and limpness, and damask frayed upon the hedge. If there was no fray on Eva's temper, there certainly was upon her nerves. But, at last, she was rewarded. The

carriage stopped at the vicarage gate, and Ernest was there to open it, a very welcome smile upon his handsome face.

“Oh! Eva, it has been so lonely,” he whispered, as he helped her off with her muffling. It was all he could find opportunity to say; Mrs. Herbert’s vigilance never admitted of one second’s intercourse for the rest of the day.

“Get up early to-morrow,” he whispered, as he stooped across her to place her music book on the piano.

“You cannot think what a bright little house-keeper Clara made us while you were away,” remarked Mr. Herbert at tea-time, when his ward left the room for a moment. “Made such good tea for us; sat at the head of the table helping the soup; and looked quite pert.” Ernest’s eye cautiously sought Eva’s by a circuitous route, but Eva looked grave as a judge.

“I have some notion,” continued Mr. Herbert, “that the Deanes are coveting Miss Clara to be mistress at Deane Hall. Mr. Deane asked me a lot of questions about her property; I dare say Mr. Chewton is ready for a wife by this.”

“You would like that for Clara, uncle, would you not?” said Eva.

"No; I cannot say I should. Clara has been brought up very retired, and I should prefer her marrying into a quieter family than the Deanes, and to not quite so fast a man as Mr. Chewton no doubt is."

Eva looked up, and something, she could not tell what, in the expression of her uncle's eye, struck her. He continued, "I wish Clara married to a kind, good, well-principled man who will make her happy. She will take her husband a fortune that will confer weight and influence on any man; she is good and amiable, and won't be bad looking, when she outgrows that roughness on her face which disfigures her at present."

"Will she ever do that?" said Ernest, looking up incredulously.

"I think so; at times it is very slight. Just at present it looks bad because she has a cold."

Eva rose early next morning and stole softly down to the drawing-room. There was Mrs. Herbert seated opposite Ernest at the fire. Eva started.

"You are unusually early, Eva," said the aunt, pointedly.

"So are you, aunt," replied the niece, with equal point.

“The morning was so cold, I came down to the fire instead of reading in my room. I was surprised to find Ernest down.” (Fie! Mrs. Herbert.)

An uncomfortable half-hour passed. Even to Mrs. Herbert it was not a pleasant feel to know that her two companions were wishing her far enough away. She hastened breakfast. A little ebullition of temper occurred thereat. Ernest was handing a plate of bread, cut in slices, round the table; he began with Eva; he recommended another piece than the one she chose; she changed it; he helped her to butter; as he was going on with the bread he saw the wing of a pheasant her uncle had cut off for her, and he brought it to her; he liked her having everything from his hand. Mrs. Herbert could stand it no longer.

“Ernest,” she exclaimed, “when you have given Eva everything you think she may require, I will thank you for a piece of bread.” Ernest looked surprised.

“I was taking it round,” he said, innocently.

“It has not progressed far as yet,” replied his aunt, tartly.

Eva’s eye directed his to the pheasant. He helped Mrs. Herbert; it was a leg, very much

shot, that he gave her. She tossed it scornfully about her plate; but Ernest's eyes were engaged elsewhere, and he was none the wiser. Eva was a more anxious observer; she had often given Ernest warning of the jealous temperament of his aunt, who could not bear not to be first with every one.

“Can I get you out with me?” asked Ernest, in a low whisper, as they walked behind Mrs. Herbert from the dining-room. That lady had tried to make Eva go before her, but it had always been her habit to walk out before her nieces, and Eva sturdily held back.

“Ask me boldly before aunt,” she answered.

He waited a little, then said—

“The morning is fine and frosty, Eva; put on your bonnet and come with me for a turn on the terrace; will you?”

“We will all go,” said Mrs. Herbert, rising.
“Clara, put on your things.”

Eva ran up to her room, snatched up her bonnet and shawl, and stole down the back stairs to put them on in the drawing-room. Her aunt, not hearing her step along the passage, believed her to be still in her room and did not hurry. Ernest was standing in the centre of the drawing-room, looking in what the Americans would call

a "tarnation fix!" He sprang forward and folded Eva to his breast.

"My own Eva, if you were a nun it could not be harder to get a word with you. Will *she* be content to walk with Clara, and let me have you?"

"I am sure not, Ernest; at least, you must walk one way with her, either going or coming."

"Anything is better than having to go with Clara. How I missed you all yesterday, dearest. Fancy my having that thing before me instead of you. Your sweet face was never out of my mind. Don't turn away, Eva; it is not often I have the chance: don't, love; do you not *know* how dear you are to me?"

She was too candid to affect ignorance of an affection she believed in and returned: she answered—

"Yes, dear Ernest, I sometimes think I am, and it makes me very happy. But loose me now: do, darling, I hear a step." She broke from him as her aunt entered.

Ernest was mistaken if he thought he was to have the choosing of his company in that walk; his aunt took his arm and never loosed it while they were out.

"How did Ernest spend the evening that we

were not here?" asked Eva of Clara, as they followed.

"Talked awhile to uncle, then fell asleep."

"What did he do in the morning, before we came home?"

"Nothing."

"Was he in the house?"

"No."

"Was he walking with Uncle Herbert?"

"No."

"By himself? Where did he go?"

"Down to the road, to see if you were coming."

"Did he go more than once?"

"Yes: many times."

"Poor Ernest!" thought Eva, with fond compassion.

"I thought you said you were obliged to attend a night school to-night, Ernest," said Mrs. Herbert, at luncheon.

"Yes; but I got my duty taken when —" He stopped short.

"When you found your father and Mysie were to be here to-day," said Eva. "They ought soon to arrive now."

Mrs. Herbert was astir betimes next day, but Eva did not come down until the prayer-bell

rang. Ernest was to leave immediately after breakfast. In the passage between their bedrooms his adieux with Eva were made.

“This has not been a comfortable visit, my own one,” he said, taking her hand in his and clasping it fervently. “I shall not be able to come up here uninvited if that old lady gets so cranky. When do you come to Oakstone?”

“As soon as the anniversary is over,” said Eva, gently.

“Perhaps I may not see you until then.”

“Do not say that, Ernest; it is a long time.”

He drew her closer to him. “We will make up for it at Oakstone, darling. My father says he is coming to walk to the station with me: I must not delay. Another kiss; good-bye.”

“Until when, Ernest?”

“Until I can see you again.”

“Can you remember me for so long?”

“No fear of my forgetting you, Eva. You must not look sad, love. It shall not be very long. Write to me often; write not only everything you say and do, but everything you think of: it is the only comfort I shall have. Coming, sir!” He kissed her hastily but tenderly, and ran down the passage.

CHAPTER XII.

A SURPRISE.

A FEW hours after Ernest's departure Eva was seated in a little arbour in the garden, erected for the view it commanded of the romantic scenery of the valley beneath; but it was not for the sake of the view that Eva was now there: it is doubtful whether she knew if it was a hill or a valley she looked out on. She felt very happy, though separated from the object of her love, and for an indefinite period. He had so openly avowed his affection that all doubtful anxiety was now at an end: she was assured of what she had long hoped and believed. Perhaps this was the first time she had suffered herself to acknowledge how entirely she loved him. As long as a doubt, or shadow of doubt, could exist, she had refrained from confessing, even to herself, the depth of her affection for him; now, she no longer repressed it, but gave

way to the delicious consciousness of love returned, without restraint. He loved her. Had not he himself told her so? Her trust in him was the firm confidence of woman's love; and, however obscure the future might loom, the star of hope shone resplendent in the horizon. Everything she looked at seemed tinged with a ray from its rosy light; and accumulated, indeed, must have been the shaft which could then have wounded or depressed that joyful heart. There is some happiness too deep for even companionship to be endured; Eva was glad to steal away, and enjoy its perfect repose alone and in silence. The completely happy, love silence; they can so much better drink in all the power and all the pleasure of their own ecstatic feelings in quietude. Sometimes her thoughts were of the morning: the tender look, the thrilling accents, the fond though hurried adieu; sometimes they were dwelling on the prospective delights of the visit to Oakstone; then they rambled off to build airy castles, whose architecture, however burnished by Fancy's golden hues, always bore a great analogy to that of Hilton parsonage: suddenly they came down with a crash, in the start she gave at becoming aware that the light

was abruptly obscured. Mr. Oakley was standing in the doorway.

Eva rose, and would have gone towards the house with him, but he drew her back into the arbour, and gently placing her on the semicircular bench that ran round it, seated himself beside her. There was a pause for a few minutes. Though Mr. Oakley appeared to have something to say he did not say it.

“My uncle and Myra Clifton are with us now,” said Eva, feeling the silence was awkward. “Ernest left this morning.”

“Is it Myra who is here? I thought it had been Miss Clifton,” replied Mr. Oakley, with a strange embarrassed manner.

Eva smiled.

“Will you not come in and see them?” she said, again rising.

“No, not now; pray, do not go yet; I have something to say to you, something to ask you. I have never been able to get an opportunity of speaking to you alone—some of the Cliftons were always by—or that Miss Neville. I reconnoitred the place to-day from the hill above and saw you coming here. I want to speak to you on a subject very near my heart. I think you must have seen

enough to be aware where my affections lie. I cannot be happy until I know whether I have any chance of those affections being returned."

He paused. Eva's clear bright eyes were raised kindly to his.

"Can you make no guess yourself?" she asked.

"If I might build hope on a manner always kind and gentle towards me, perhaps I could; but I am not presumptuous enough to build on that alone. I want some greater evidence: at least some confirmation of hope."

Eva was silent: she did not know what to say. She wished he had carried his proposal to Agnes herself, instead of making it through her.

"Oh, Miss Desmond," he continued, on seeing her hesitate, "if you knew how entirely my affections are engaged, how deeply my heart is set upon this cast!"

He took her hand in his fervour; Eva coloured a little. She felt for him; this was so unlike his usual self-possessed manner.

"May I hope?" he asked, gazing earnestly at her.

"I think— you— may— perhaps—" she said, hesitating, weighing every word, in fear of

divulging more of Agnes' secret than maiden delicacy would warrant: for Eva's heart was true as steel. "But Mr. Oakley ——"

"But what?"

"Had you not better ask, yourself?"

"Ask whom? Your uncle?"

"Yes; or, at first, would it not be better to speak to—herself."

He looked puzzled.

"Mrs. Herbert?"

"No; to Agnes."

"Agnes! What has she to do with it?"

Eva stared at him with undisguised surprise.

"Why should I speak to Agnes, Miss Desmond?"

"I thought you wished to know if—she liked you."

"She! Miss Clifton?"

"Yes. Was it not of her you were speaking to me?"

"No."

"Of whom, then?"

"Of yourself."

"You do not mean——" She stopped short; the truth began to flash on her: yet—could it be possible? "I beg your pardon," she said,

“I am afraid I mistook. I thought you were speaking to me of Miss Clifton.”

“What put Miss Clifton into your head?”

“I do not know. I thought —”

“Nor I either. What did you think?”

“I thought it was her whom you liked.”

“What could have made you think so? I hope Miss Clifton has not made the same mistake. I do not think I ever gave her any reason to think I liked her.”

Eva looked very crestfallen: a baffled diplomatiste.

“No, Miss Desmond,” continued the lover, “it is you I love: you are the only woman I ever saw whom I wished to call my wife. Your good, true, warm heart and sweet disposition have won me, as much as your beauty and vivacity have entranced me. My devotion for you is deep, steadfast, tender, and sincere; my admiration unbounded. Now that you know it, will you give me the same answer that you did when you believed I was speaking of another? May I hope now? You do not answer. Why do you look so,—almost frightened?”

“I am so surprised—I do not know what to say.”

“Let me teach you.” He took her hand gently and respectfully. “Say again, ‘I think you may.’”

“But I cannot say that.” She drew away her hand.

“You cannot love me!” he said, in a tone of bitter disappointment. “Had you made me aware of this before, you might have spared me much that I shall now find hard to bear.”

“Oh, do not speak so reproachfully. I would not pain any one. I never knew, I never thought, it was me; I always imagined —” Fear of betraying Agnes restrained her.

“You are too sincere and too kind-hearted for me to doubt you, Miss Desmond; be still more so, and tell me whether even the channel of hope is open to me; whether a longer acquaintance, whether tested constancy and devotion can make you think of me; or whether you refuse me because you like another? You are above all petty conventional dissimulation; answer me candidly.”

“It can never be. Forgive me if I cause you pain.” She spoke in a very subdued gentle tone, and evidently with deep consideration for his feelings. He took a turn or two of the extent of the arbour, then came and stood before her again.

“Thank you, at least, for that ingenuous answer. I trust we shall continue friends, since you will not admit of a dearer name. Forget, if you can, that this conversation has ever taken place.” He held out his hand, she placed hers in it, looking hesitatingly and inquiringly at him.

“No,” he said, reading her look, “I shall not go into the house: I should not be very good company just now. I shall go as I came; no one knows that I am here. But I hope to see you again before you leave this country, when I shall have crushed down the hope you deny, and am able to meet you more calmly than I could at present.” He wrung her hand, and turned sorrowfully away.

Eva sat like a statue, bewildered with amazement. Such a finale as this to the Oakley courtship had never entered her mind. True, she had two or three times suspected her aunt of nourishing a suspicion of Mr. Oakley’s attentions being to her, or, at least, that she encouraged him; but she had attributed it solely to an hallucination, caused by that lady’s inordinate antipathy to weaknesses of the kind. The first moment that abatement of surprise admitted of reflection was given to Agnes. “Poor Agnes!” thought she,

“what a death blow to her!” Then she wandered into fruitless conjectures of the result; as to whether Agnes would relinquish all idea of him, now that irrefragable evidence made his indifference to her apparent; whether it would cost her much to hear the real state of his feelings; and whether she ought to communicate it to her. She deplored the overthrow of the happiness she had fondly fancied she was helping to effect; she felt sorry for Mr. Oakley, his look and tone had bespoken feeling deep and wounded. “How I wish it had been Agnes he liked; all might have been happy then!” was the exclamation that burst from that generous heart, in which no sentiment of paltry vanity for one moment found a place. Ernest would scarcely have thanked her, had he known that other people so occupied her mind that there was no room for him: I do believe that for about an hour she forgot there was such a person in the world. She was recalled to things actual by the appearance of Myra Clifton.

“How I have been searching for you, Eva!” she began with impatience, “and here you are very coolly enjoying your own company and shirking ours.”

Eva felt conscious she had shirked society

rather more than was polite that morning. She smiled sweetly, and rose.

“Let us go for a turn, Mysie dear; it is getting cold here.”

Myra Clifton was an amiable good-tempered girl; more quick and less sensible than her sister, she had a habit of speaking on the spur of the moment without pausing to reflect, which made her remarks appear sometimes silly, and often inopportune; and this fault, which she did not take sufficient pains to correct, frequently brought down reproof on her from both her father and Agnes. Indeed, it became the fashion among the family at Oakstone, to consider that what Myra said must be silly. Whereas, it was often very much to the purpose, though perhaps what a keener tact would have suppressed, instead of uttered. The frequency and occasional asperity of these rebukes, resulting from solicitude on her father’s part, and, it may be, a little love of sorial domination on that of Agnes, had cowed the young Myra; and though she still often spoke too hastily and unadvisedly, there was a restraint and diffidence in her general manner that bespoke want of confidence in herself; she seemed never to be quite sure whether reproof would not follow what

she was saying. With Eva she was quite a different being ; she feared no lecture there, and when alone with her gave her spirits full play. Eva was very kind to her ; but she did not feel the same pleasure in companionship with her that she did in Agnes'.

“I wish that Clara Neville was dead,” was Myra’s petulant exclamation, as she hooked her arm in her cousin’s.

“My dear Mysie ! Has anything been going wrong ? ”

“Uncle and Aunt Herbert set such store by that stupid thing ; and papa makes a row, and says, I don’t talk enough to her, and that they will be offended. I cannot talk to her. If I ask her a question, she answers ‘Yes,’ or ‘No,’ and there it ends. Papa says, Cannot I do as you do: I am sure I don’t know how you manage to talk to her ; all I know is, I cannot.”

“No ; I am sure you could not : you are not so accustomed to her as I am. Where is she now ? ”

“In the drawing-room, with papa and Aunt Herbert : the place was very dull without you, and papa was looking all sorts of reproach at me : I could not make Clara talk ; so, at last, I ran out.

I never saw anybody like you, Eva ; you can do what everybody likes."

Eva laughed.

"Indeed you can, Eva ; I never hear any one find fault with you, and you are the only one who never finds fault with me. I am longing for you to come again to Oakstone."

"I am looking forward to this visit with great pleasure myself," said Eva. "It will be soon now."

"Agnes desired me ask you to come the beginning of next month. We are to see company, I believe, after the year is over; and Agnes says, she knows nothing about it, and could not get on at all without you to help her. Agnes is alway wishing you were her sister, but I am sure I don't know how that could be. I do not think Agnes would like not to be the elder sister, and I do not think she would like to take advice from a younger one."

"I should be consulting partner—I suppose, Co., and Co. is never expected to speak unless spoken to," said Eva, laughingly. In a graver tone she said, or rather thought aloud, "And so Agnes would like me to be her sister."

"So she often says ; and I wish you were too, if

it was only to go between me and Agnes ; but I do not see how you could ever be our sister without you married Ernest."

Eva turned to pluck a branch of the lowly emblem of the haughtiest of England's royal races, which overhung the terrace walk :—perhaps she was conscious that the pink was becoming carmine in her cheeks ; she gave a short forced laugh, and said,—

“ Did you ever say that to Agnes ? ”

“ Yes ; I did.”

“ And what did she say ? ”

“ Said as she always says, ‘ How can you be so silly, Mysie.’ I could not see anything so silly in it ; Ernest must marry some one, and I am sure he will go far before he can find so nice a wife as you will make ; so good, so gay, so handsome, and so clever.”

“ My dear Mysie ! ”

“ Indeed, you are, Eva. Every one says so. Besides, Ernest is so very fond of you.”

“ How do you know ? ”

“ I can see it. With you he is not the same as he is or ever was with any one else : he is gentler to us all since he knew you. Agnes never thinks me silly when I talk of her and Mr. Oakley ; and I

am sure, there is not half so much to talk about as there is of Ernest and you. Charles Oakley always seemed to me to be wishing himself with you two, when he was made go with Agnes. He never wants to come to Oakstone unless you are there."

"Perhaps he may get to want: if Agnes finds he does not, she will give him up in time."

"I do not know: Agnes lives on very little love." She would call me silly if I lived on double as much."

"Poor Mysie," said Eva, kindly. "And is there no one that you would like a little love from, or a little help from a friend about."

"No, indeed. Charles Oakley is the only man I ever saw fit to be married, and Agnes wants him."

"Never mind, Mysie; your turn will come. Let us go in now, or we shall be in disgrace about this heiress."

"Don't tell I said anything about you and Ernest; may be they will say I had no business."

"You need not fear, Mysie; I shall not."

CHAPTER XIII.

SHADOW.

HAS any one ever marked the heavens on a gusty autumn day—how fair, clear, and bright will reign the whole expanse of sky, from horizon to horizon not one murky shadow dimming its azure beauty—when suddenly the squall will come on; clouds, at first light and fleeting, will gather—from whence, it puzzles the eye to tell, all around had seemed so lucid and transparent; they multiply and thicken until the whole canopy, so late serene and smiling, becomes overcast with one dark, surcharged pall. Sometimes it falls in heavy rain, sometimes disperses as it collected—gave warning but did not strike. Sometimes a rainbow spans the murky veil, telling that, though effulgence may be obscured it is not extinguished; that it will suffer the shower to have its turn, and then reappear to dry it up with its beams? So must the sky of life be changeful

in this gusty world of ours. Who may hope to experience no mutations in the sky of earthly happiness? If it were so, should we not forget that there is a brighter Heaven beyond; or, at least, be too well contented with our own to yearn for the more radiant? No; overshadowed the sky of life must often be! Well for us if the rainbow is there to whisper that the storm will pass.

The first cloud that obscured the fair sky of Eva's bliss came in the shape of a letter. A letter from Ernest, written a few days after his departure from Hislop. Mrs. Herbert opened the bag, looked significantly at the letter, and handed it to her niece. It was a long letter, but not of unusual length for him; it contained several pages very closely written. Eva drew but one from the envelope and read it. She did not observe that her aunt was furtively watching her while she read: her face was bent over the letter, and she was not aware of the stealthy glances cast upon her. As she read, her face became grave and a little downcast; more than once hot tears gushed impulsively to her eyes. In a short time she left the room. In her own—the door bolted—the remaining sheets were drawn

forth, and first hastily, and then slowly and attentively perused. The bright and sunny look again dropped from that soft brow and she sat pensive and meditative, a look of puzzled wonder in her eyes as if trying to realize unexpected disappointment. She was disappointed in her letter. It was not the kind of letter she had expected would follow his last visit—nay, more, she could detect in it a difference from his other letters; so slight a difference, indeed, that tact less refined and acute than that of a woman who loves would never have discovered it; but subtile and wily must be the dissimulation that eludes the vigilance of that all-penetrating magician Love:—to any other Ernest's letter would have read a counterpart of his former ones; but it did not read so to Eva, or she would not have thus sat listless and perplexed, the open letter on her knee, and the sunshine darkened on her brow. True that the letter, as usual, recapitulated all his movements from the time he had parted with her until the hour he was writing it; told even the time of his going out and coming in, but there was more fact and less sentiment in the narrative than was wont. He told her he should not be able to see her again until she went to Oakstone; he expressed regret

for it, but he gave no reason, he left her to infer that it was caused by the annoyance he had experienced from Mrs. Herbert during his last visit. In his writing there was a constraint, as if he were not telling all he had to tell. He hinted obscurely at inclination often running counter to duty, and he spoke with a tinge of sadness of the slight portion of happiness which fell to the lot of mortals: all this from a lover who had just expressed his love and been assured of its return, sounded very strange. At the conclusion of the letter he said he thought he had told her everything that could in any way interest her. What boundary was he drawing? *Every* thing connected with him had interest for her; he was used to think so when he outpoured every secret thought in trust and confidence before her.

When Eva went to bed that night she read the letter over again, and for the first time since she had been corresponding with him, instead of putting it under her pillow with a smile seraphic in its love and peace; with a sigh, she placed it between the leaves of the Bible, from which she had been reading the evening chapter, and laid it aside where she should not see it.

But the cloud passed. In her answer she did

not conceal that the letter had pained her ; she was always open with Ernest ; she dreaded clouds, or misunderstandings to arise between them ; she knew how often their baneful shadows have remained fixed for the want of one explanatory ray to clear them away, and she guarded against it. She thought she was successful. Ernest's next letter reassured her ; it was kindly and tenderly written, and for a time the horizon was again bright. Very shortly after, she fell ill, caught a heavy cold which prostrated her strength and confined her to her bed. It was a disappointment that Ernest did not come to see her. He wrote often and anxiously to inquire for her, always praying for one line to relieve his unhappiness about her. Eva felt grateful for his solicitude, though, perhaps, she thought it might have overcome his repugnance to encounter his aunt's watchful interference, and brought him to visit her ; but that he appeared to have no intention of doing, and Eva would not ask him to do anything she thought he was really averse to ; but she became restless and discontented, with that longing, hungering feeling which absence from those beloved engenders ; she determined not to remain where she could no longer see him, and as

soon as she was sufficiently recovered to travel, she wrote to her cousin Agnes to fix a day for leaving Hislop and going to Oakstone.

Mrs. Herbert seemed very sorry to lose her. Clara had returned to school, and when Eva was gone she should be alone, and she felt very lonely at the prospect. She seemed unwilling to let Eva out of her sight during the last few days of her stay. They strolled about the woods and gardens together, talking over everything they could think of, taking their last of conversation and companionship. Mrs. Herbert made Eva play over her favourite airs, and sing her favourite songs, each of these last evenings; she seemed as if she never could have sufficiently impressed on her memory all recollections of the companion she was losing.

“I must hear all these over again,” she said, as Eva closed the piano on the last night. “I shall go down to Oakstone before you leave, when you are near going, to see the last of you. I shall miss you sadly.”

Eva made no answer, her eyes were full: she kissed her aunt’s forehead and drew her seat close to her. She was fond of her aunt, with all her peculiarities and strictness; she had become

habituated to them, and except when they clashed with a very dear feeling, as of late, she was hardly cognizant of them; she had spent much time with Mrs. Herbert, and it was Eva's nature to attach herself to the people and places she lived amongst. She could not part with Hislop without emotion, notwithstanding the happier time she was looking forward to pass at Oakstone.

CHAPTER XIV.

CLOUDS.

“To think of the false-hearted Edward being gone!” was Eva’s laughing remark as she walked from the station with her cousins, the day of her arrival at Oakstone.

“I doubt,” said Mysie, “that Eddie was the false one; he said you——” A look from her sister silenced her.

“What did he say? out with it. Do not mind Agnes’s rebuking eye. Some compliment to me, I am sure.”

“He said nothing at all,” said Agnes. “Mysie is always catching up the wrong end of things.”

“Why, Agnes, dear, why should you be so angry? You told me yourself, Eddie was vexed because I did not pay him more attention.”

“Did I? Eddie’s nonsense I suppose.”

“You seem determined to condemn the intellect of all the world to-day. Tell me, Mysie, when

I am out of earshot does she never say, Eva is so foolish?"

"I never know what I am to say, and what I am not, so I had better not talk at all," said Myra.

"Nonsense, Mysie! to be sure you are to talk, only talk sense, if you can."

Eva changed the subject.

"Ernest is not here either?" more asked than remarked Eva of Agnes, as the two girls ran up the stairs, for whatever change time would admit of being made in the traveller's dress before dinner. "I thought I should have seen him at Hilton station."

"Very likely he was from home."

"Don't you expect him here?"

"Not now; he will come next week."

"Not till next week!"

"Not so very long, is it? This is Thursday."

"Some way I thought I should find him here; was sure of it when I did not see him at Hilton. What day does he come?"

"Why, we wrote and asked him to come on Wednesday, and Mr. Oakley with him; because we intended to have dinner-parties on that day and the next; but Ernest was engaged for Wednesday: he cannot come until Thursday."

A sigh of disappointment escaped Eva. She tried to rally, but it was task work. She felt hurt and surprised that Ernest should have made no effort to see her sooner; then she felt angry with herself for being unreasonable; he could not help being engaged: many things might have occurred to prevent his being there that week,—why should she doubt him? had he not told her he loved her? she dashed away a few tears that would not be reasonable, and determined to conquer every unworthy thought.

She believed herself rewarded. The next day brought her a note from Ernest, enclosed in a letter to Agnes, explaining to her satisfaction obligations which prevented his seeing her before Thursday. Eva's was not a desponding nature; very obscure must be the night in which her eyes could not catch the glimmer of Hope's small star: no longer doubts or fears perplexed or worried her, her only thought was of his coming, of all being cleared up, and of there being no more shadows between them; the light laughed merrily as ever in her eye, and smiles broke sweet and pleasant round her lip. With kindly interest she assisted Agnes in the accumulation of household duties which company-seeing involves — together they bent

their young heads over Dolby, the highest *cuisine* authority of the day, and held privy councils with the cook and butler. The old Indian china was unpacked and ranged on the table of the quondam schoolroom, to be filled with condiments fished out of conserve jars and Portuguese fruit boxes in the storeroom, the epergne had to be dressed with flowers, the list made out of who was to take who—a thousand light duties hitherto unknown to Agnes, with whom Eva was both oracle and assistant.

The first dinner passed off very well. Eva's sparkling vivacity did much to assist it, and Agnes feeling confidence in her clever prompter went through her part surprisingly. Miss Boare was of the party, having arrived that morning. She had been engaged for some time to pay a visit at Oakstone, and had herself fixed that it should take place at the same time as Eva's. She complimented the young people very much on the taste and judgment they had displayed, asked innumerable questions about everything, and demanded the receipt of every dish on the table for her cook, who was "sadly inexperienced."

"Of what use will the receipts be to her?" said

Myra, "she would not give her the materials to make them."

"My dear Mysie, how sillily you do run on," said Mr. Clifton, looking up from a handsome tankard which Miss Boare had just presented him with.

Myra wondered what she had said silly, and was silent.

Wednesday had also brought Mr. Oakley to Oakstone. He met Eva with calm kindness, as one does a relative or old friend, neither in word or manner reverting to the past, nor did he seem to wish it remembered. He evidently endeavoured to preserve the same deportment as usual towards the Miss Cliftons, but Eva could now see, and saw with regret, that her cousin Agnes's hopes were built without foundation. She felt puzzled as to what course she should pursue regarding Mr. Oakley's offer to herself. It seemed to be almost traitor to Agnes to have received it and keep her in ignorance, and yet, she reflected, what happiness would the revelation bring to any one. She longed to consult Ernest, but even that she could not tell whether honour to Mr. Oakley would not forbid.

Ernest had told her in his letter that he would

come early. She expected him by the train which passed at eleven o'clock in the forenoon, and seating herself in the bay-window she watched for the white cravat to appear at the poplar-trees. She was not kept long in expectancy. The station house was situated but a little beyond, and a few minutes after eleven she espied between the two tall bare stems, first a hat; then, a white cravat appeared above the hedge. Eva went into the hall; there, at a round table covered with flies, feathers and hanks of gut, was seated Mr. Oakley, busily arranging a casting line. He spoke to her. She went up to the table which was opposite one of the windows, and appeared to interest herself in his occupation, but Charles Oakley was still too much of a lover not to note that her thoughts as well as her eye were fixed on the white cravat which was marching quickly along the holly hedge; it was lost sight of for a moment behind the intervening shrubs, and then Ernest appeared upon the drive. A nervous thrill ran through Eva; she did not know why, but she could no longer meet him with the unmixed joyousness of former days. Instead of coming straight up to the house, he turned down a narrow walk which led through the shrubbery to the children's

play-ground, and from thence to the back part of the house.

He is coming in the back-way, thought Eva ; and, leaving Mr. Oakley, she ran down the stone passage to tell Agnes and to meet Ernest. She met the former coming from her storeroom.

“ We have not planned the dessert, Eva, dear,” she said.

“ No, not yet. Ernest is come.”

“ Is he ?”

“ Yes, I think he is coming in the back way ; he turned down the play-ground walk ; he ought to be here now.”

But he did not come. Eva’s impatience could ill brook the consultations on the many trifles which Agnes seemed to be routing out to detain her. Presently Arlette ran down the passage.

“ Ernest is come. He is in the hall.”

“ Well, what of that ?” said Agnes.

“ He wants ——” said the child, and stopped ; she appeared to have forgotten what he wanted.

“ He wants Agnes and me, I suppose,” said Eva, anticipating the usual message.

“ No ; he wants things to fish.”

“ Oh, his basket and tackle are in my store-

room," said her sister, "they are what he wants, no doubt."

"Surely he is not going to fish the minute he comes! Arlette, go and tell him Agnes is in her store-room."

Ernest came, but slowly; he and Eva met in the passage; they shook hands; each looked at the other, but neither spoke. Agnes came hastily from her store-room.

"Where are my fishing traps, Agnes? Charles Oakley is in a hurry to be off."

He followed his sister into the store-room, and Eva remained standing outside the door. She saw them busy over the tackle, which they were extricating from a net it had got entangled with; a strange indefinite feeling of exclusion, which she had never before experienced at Oakstone, stole over her; she turned away and went into the drawing-room, from the window of which she saw the two gentlemen, rods in hand, cross the fields beneath towards the river. She was in a maze; what to make of it she did not know. The last time she had seen Ernest, his whole energies would have been put in requisition to evade the fishing and secure her to his side. Still she found excuses. Perhaps Charles Oakley had

been impatient—it was not fair to be too exacting ; she must not expect Ernest to abandon everything and devote every moment to her ; no doubt he would be back early. She went to assist Agnes, as usual, and after luncheon went up to her own room. The dress she was to wear that evening was pinned to the curtains of the bed. She had got up at six o'clock that morning to put the trimming on that dress, that the whole day might be devoted to Ernest ; he had always been annoyed if she absented herself from where he was. She looked at it now with a vexed wronged feeling ; she had been cheated of her sleep without cause. She sat down and remained long, sitting very still, surprised, perplexed, and uneasy, yet unable to guess the reason. She was roused by a rap at the door, and Myra came in.

“ Eva, dear, the gentlemen have returned ; I thought I would come and tell you.”

“ Where are they ? ”

“ Mr. Oakley is gone to his room, Ernest is in the schoolroom.”

“ Does he want me ? ”

“ I was not with him : he went there when he came in.”

To look for us, I suppose, thought Eva. She rose and accompanied Myra down.

“Do not say, Eva, that I told you they had come home.”

“No, love, I never mention what you tell me.”

Ernest was standing with his back to the fireplace, Agnes sitting opposite to him, when Eva entered. She did not remark then, though she remembered afterwards, that their conversation stopped abruptly when she opened the door. She went up to Ernest with one of her old smiles :

“Had you good sport?” she asked.

“No. We should have had, had I been alone: Charles Oakley would turn back just as we began to catch anything. Had we gone on to the deep pools, as I wanted, we should have had our baskets full.”

This was more addressed to Agnes than in answer to Eva.

“He was in no hurry to return,” said Pique. “It must have been vexing to so good a sportsman to break off when fish were taking,” pleaded Indulgence.

There was a pause which no one was willing

to break ; at last, Agnes, who seemed as if she had been looking for something to say, said—

“ Ernest, will you tell Wilson what wine will be wanted for dinner ? ”

“ Then I had better do it now, before I forget it.”

He left the room and did not return. Eva waited for some time.

“ No doubt his father has met and carried him off,” she thought.

Perhaps the reader will deem Eva unusually opaque, but many times had similar occurrences taken place, when Ernest had not come as he was expected, and afterwards, a pitiful tale was poured into Eva’s ear, telling of how he had been waylaid and kidnapped and prevented coming to her, and how impatiently he had borne it. Finding he did not return, and not knowing what had become of him, she went to join the others in the drawing-room. There was Ernest, before the fire, talking to the circle present, no compulsion in the world restraining his movements. She looked at him, but his eyes shunned hers. Then, for the first time, it struck Eva that he was avoiding her.

No conviction strikes us more forcibly than

one which has been long in penetrating the mind. Evidence has been gathering unknown to ourselves, and, the cuticle once pierced, pours in its accumulated flood. How palpable it now seems. We wonder at the opacity which hitherto excluded it. All for which Eva had sought a reason or excuse during the day, fondly inventing when she could not find one, was now discovered to be the effect of Ernest's own voluntary act. So far she was still at fault, that she did not know why he shirked her ; she had no key to the change that had come over him, but she was no longer unconscious that a change existed. If one veil had dropped from her eyes, another had spread itself upon her brow ; the light seemed dashed from it by magic, and with a slow, unelastic step she crossed the room, and sat down at the greatest distance its dimensions allowed from Ernest—a feeling at her heart that had never been there before.

CHAPTER XV.

“THE RAINY DAY.”

THE second dinner party was to take place that evening, and at it, Ernest and Eva, who generally, no matter how coupled they went in, contrived to get seated together, ranged themselves on opposite sides of the table: times had indeed changed when the dinner passed and the ladies withdrew to the drawing-room without the lovers' eyes having once met. When the gentlemen followed, Ernest seated himself by a gay and lively girl who was one of the party, and with whom he was but slightly acquainted; but, whether he found himself unequal to the task he attempted, or whether he was struck by remorse, on glancing at the deep melancholy of Eva's expressive face, as, seated at a table, she turned over the leaves of an album as a pretext for silence, he rose suddenly, with a distressed look, and took a chair near her. She did not raise her downcast eyes,

nor did he address her : in silence they sat, heavy thoughts at the heart of each.

With restless impatience, the elder Mr. Clifton marked them. Provoked with Eva for looking so sad, angry with his son for being absent and inefficient, he darted some scowling glances at them, which had not the effect of enlivening matters. Miss Crosbie, the girl whose side Ernest had abandoned, went to the piano and commenced singing ; and, heedless of his father's gesticulations, Ernest remained seated with his back to her, not appearing to hear, or to know that there was another being in the room than the one he silently and furtively contemplated.

As the carriages were announced for the company to depart, old Mr. Clifton gave his arm successively to each of the married ladies to conduct them to the door ; Miss Crosbie, he stood aside for Ernest to take ; but the lady, having twice bade her intended escort good-night without being heard, was passing on, when, with a start, Ernest seemed to recollect himself, bowed and made way for her to pass. Darting an annihilating look at his unhappy son, Mr. Clifton rushed by him and drew Miss Crosbie's arm within his own.

The following morning, as Eva descended from

her room before breakfast, she encountered Ernest at the foot of the staircase. Motioning for her to follow, he led the way to a small room where school and untidy books, not admissible to the library, were kept, and which opened near where they stood.

“Eva,” he began, “I know you blame me; but you do me wrong: I *cannot* help it.”

Her tears fell like rain.

“No, no; I do not blame, but I do not understand. I cannot account for—I cannot even guess why you are so unkind.”

“I am not unkind, Eva, though I may seem so: God knows I would not be unkind to you; but we must not go on as we have done.”

“Are you changed?” she asked faintly.

“Call it changed if you will, but the change is not in me, it is in circumstances: I will try to explain to you.”

He took her hands in his, and drew her close to him. Encouraged by his more gentle manner, her head nestled in his shoulder, as it often had before, and she wept quietly on. He suffered her to remain there, and stooping down, leaned his cheek upon her forehead, trying to soften by a tender manner the harshness of cruel words.

He did not seem very well to know what he wished to say, or else it was not easy to say it. He spoke in broken sentences, with long pauses between. He said much about the familiar intercourse that had existed between them; that they had commenced as brother and sister—but other feelings had crept in, and a dearer relationship been established between them—one which had not failed to be remarked by those who looked on.

To all this Eva assented, wondering why he recapitulated it. He went on to say that rumours had arisen, which had, at length, reached his father's ears, whose rage and indignation Ernest described as something frightful; he would not listen to appeal or expostulation, and had forbidden his son ever to name or pursue the subject. Much more Ernest said, in the same detached snatches. Eva heard him out; then, in faint, tremulous whispers, she promised to forego all that he wished her, and to return to the companionship on which they had started; all she petitioned for was that there was to be no unkindness between them, that they were to be still dear friends. Eva was sincere in her promise, for she did not know what an impossibility it contained.

Ernest seemed satisfied; both felt more happy

for the explanation, death-blow as it was to love and hope, and with less heavy, though, by no means light hearts, they went in to morning prayers. Love in its full tide is a very hard thing for the heart to resign: no blank leaves so great a loneliness. It is a vain thing for two lovers to imagine they could turn into platonic friends at a moment's notice; passion will not subside because we bid it: a touch will gall the riven links.

The day passed in a series of little disappointments and vexations. Each shunned the other, not knowing how to school their deportment, and neither was satisfied. Ernest proposed a walk too distant for Eva, who had not recovered her strength since her illness, and on whom recent events had not had a very beneficial effect; it was Mr. Oakley who remembered that she was not equal to it. Ernest seemed provoked, and Eva, though with an aching heart, advocated their going without her: the end of it was, Charles Oakley settled that he and Ernest should take the more distant excursion, in company, and return to escort the ladies for a walk more suited to the compass of their powers. They did so: a sad walk it was, though Ernest walked by Eva's side, and she tried to smile back

her tears and keep her promise. She had a good deal to bear, but she bore it. Harassed and uncomfortable, Ernest seemed more out of humour than she had ever seen him in her life, "Why will you cry?" he once asked almost crossly, as he watched her drooping head.

"I am not crying, Ernest," she said, meekly, and turned her pale tearless face for him to see.

He felt unhappy, but he looked only provoked.

That evening it happened that Ernest could not avoid handing Eva in to dinner. She was the only female visitor, except Miss Boare, whose escort the master of the house indisputably was. Eva therefore fell to Ernest's lot, and consequently was seated next to him at dinner. Many an anxious wrathful glance was cast by the host from the bottom of the table, at the forbidden proximity, which had thus fortuitously taken place. Both the cousins were subdued, and their conversation was low and grave, suggestive of confidential communication to jealous ears, which, were too distant to overhear how very commonplace it was. Those familiar with old Mr. Clifton had no difficulty in discovering that a storm was brewing. It burst forth in the drawing-

room. By Agnes's management, Ernest had been sitting away from Eva all the evening ; she had contrived to occupy him by herself. After tea was removed, and they were again dispersing through the room to their various employments, Ernest was returning to his former seat by his sister ; but catching Eva's eye, he felt its soft mournful expression more reproach than he could bear ; he pushed away his chair, and going up to the sofa where she and Charles Oakley were seated, threw off the pillows and made room for himself beside her. His father's passion overflowed. Nervous and choleric by nature, uneasiness had now goaded him beyond endurance. Livid with rage he appeared unable to articulate, but with a scowl, which seemed that of a demon, he sprang forward, and in his fury would have dragged his son from his seat, but for the interposition of Charles Oakley, who, with exquisite tact, placed himself between them, and covered Ernest's retreat from the obnoxious position. All this time there was not a word spoken : in silence the pantomime was acted by the gentlemen ; the ladies sat shocked and mute, and only by the blanching of Eva's cheek and lip could the depth of her feeling be guessed. Charles Oakley

came to the rescue manfully, did what he could to ignore the attack, and rally the broken spirits of the discomfited—no easy matter in so complete a rout. Eva felt the kindness of his intentions ; and a grateful smile flickered over her wan face when he said, as he lighted a candle for her to go to bed :

“ You look tired, Miss Desmond ; you have over-walked yourself. It was our fault to take you so long a walk before you had recovered your strength.”

Before she gained her room, Ernest intercepted her.

“ Eva,” he said hoarsely, “ I wish to speak to you in the morning. At what hour can you see me ? ”

“ At any hour.”

“ It must be before breakfast. I leave with Charles Oakley immediately after. Will half-past seven be too early for you ? ”

“ No.”

“ Then I will pass your door at that time ; open it when you hear my step.” He looked with regretful compassion at her, at that pale sad face whose radiance he had never before seen dimmed by a cloud ; he smothered a heavy sigh within

his breast, kissed her cold cheek and went away.

At the appointed hour next morning, Eva was dressed, and seating herself on a trunk which had not been unpacked since her arrival, waited for the signal of her lover's step. She held a letter in her hand which she had written the night before, a letter in every line of which breathed love, deep, fervent, and self-abnegating. She seemed to forget her own sorrow and mortification and to think but of his. She offered to abide by his every wish, and bade him take no heed of hers; she blamed herself for not being able to bear his altered treatment better, and promised to conquer all emotion if he would but give her a little time to recover. One supplication alone the letter contained; the same earnest, craving, clinging prayer that there should not be unkindness between them.

She had not sat long when a loud rapid tread came along the passage; she opened the door just as her cousin Charles was passing. He looked surprised.

“ You are early, Eva.”

“ Perhaps it is too early to go down,” she said, and turned back into her room. She left the

door ajar, but the next step that passed she felt afraid of venturing out, lest it should not be him.

“Eva!” said a low voice, and she passed out. Her face was very white, save a dark rim round each heavy eye, telling of weeping and loss of rest. Ernest felt shocked as he looked at her, but he had a part to perform and he had nerved himself for it. He gave her his arm and they went down together to the bookroom. As they went, she gave him the letter, which he put into his pocket without looking at. There was no fire in the bookroom grate. Ernest took his stand on the hearthrug, propping his back against the wide projecting slab of the chimney-piece, his figure very erect, his attitude and bearing that of a man who was braced for an internal struggle. It had been his habit always when alone with Eva to take her hands in his while he conversed with her, and now, as she stood before him, mechanically her hands sought their usual resting-place; his were in his pockets. For a moment a slight flush passed over her face as she became aware of it, and her hands drooped to her sides.

“It is not without deep grief,” he began, “that

I have sought this meeting. You do not know what regret it is to me to say what I know must pain you. Things cannot go on as they now are—neither of us could bear it.”

“ We have found it hard—at least, I have—it was so sudden—I was so unprepared. I shall have recovered a little by the next time you come ——”

“ I am not coming again.”

With a wild start she looked up, in a kind of incredulous horror, at his face.

“ You do not mean that ? ” she gasped.

But Ernest did : she read no refutation of his words in his grave cold face. In a firm hard tone, which seemed afraid of trusting itself with one softened accent, he began to speak to her of the necessity of breaking off an intercourse so fraught with danger to them both, and to which a happy consummation was out of the question, in consequence of his father’s opposition. He told her he had weighed well what he was doing, and though her happiness seemed clouded for the present, his decision was calculated to induce its restoration ; but, if he gave way to the indulgence of the moment, it might be sacrificed for ever. He urged her to bear up against what was in-

evitable, to seek strength and consolation where alone it was to be found, and to lean upon the arm that never failed to support. He spoke long, for Eva made no reply. She did not comprehend or take in the half of what he said—all she knew was that he was speaking words of separation. Her grief was very silent: she thought him very cruel, but she did not say so. She made no resistance, uttered no reproach. She did not cry much; at intervals large tears rolled slowly down her checks, but she was too subdued for passionate weeping. She did not expect this. She thought their intercourse was to change, but she did not think that it was to cease. She felt shocked and stunned, as well as grieved. At last, seeing he had paused, she said, in a very low voice, in the inquiry of whose saddened accents, perhaps, a yet clinging hope might have been detected:

“Then we are parting for ever?”

“No, not for ever, Eva. You will come to this country again, and we shall meet as if nothing had occurred.”

She shook her head mournfully. For a while neither spoke. It was Eva who broke the silence; raising her face from his shoulder, she said in an altered tone:

“Good-bye, Ernest.”

He stooped to kiss her. She pressed her white lips to his with the long lingering kiss of one who feels it is *the last*, and turning away, left the room, as those go who leave hope and happiness behind them.

There were no morning prayers at Oakstone that day; a glance at her brother sufficed to show Agnes that he was not equal to the task of reading them; she ordered breakfast to be announced without them.

“But where is Miss Desmond?” asked Miss Boare, as she crossed the hall on her way to the dining-room, where breakfast was served.

“Eva is not a very early one,” said Mr. Clifton, “Mysie, you had better see if she is ready.”

“Eva was dressed long ago: I saw her,” said Charles. “I should not wonder if she was sick; when I saw her, her face was the colour of a sheet of paper.”

“You had better see, Mysie,” said her father, gravely.

Mysie left the room. It was long before she returned, but no one made any remark. At last she came.

“Eva is not well, and will not come down,” she said.

“You had better send her some breakfast upstairs, Agnes,” said Mr. Clifton.

“She said she would not have any,” said Mysie.

“Never mind Mysie; send her some breakfast.”

“What does Eva complain of, Mysie, my dear?” said Miss Boare.

“I do not know; she does not seem to like to speak.”

“Her head, perhaps?”

“I should think she felt faint; she is lying on the bed with her eyes shut, and her face is as white as the sheets.”

Pleasant news this for Ernest. Mr. Clifton gave his second daughter a look that made her answer, “I do not know,” to every other question she was asked relative to Eva’s state, and the breakfast proceeded as best it might.

The wretched Eva, on gaining her room, had thrown herself on her knees beside the bed; there, burying her face in the coverlet, she lay almost prostrated, faintly murmuring words of prayer intermingled with bitter tears. While she thus

lay, she heard Ernest leave the bookroom, and pass along at the foot of the staircase towards the grand hall. His step was slow and heavy: Eva listened for the last; Oh, what a weight of misery can crowd into that one sound, the *last footfall*: there is something unutterably lonely in it; the last tie between us and the departing. As the sound dulled upon her ear, she rose from her knees, and sick and giddy crept into the bed. The light of love, and hope, and poesy, all that etherealizes life, seemed struck from her, nothing left but its dark materiality.

Long she lay, scarcely heeding or answering those who came and spoke to her; she would not touch the breakfast they brought her; once she asked for a little water, her mouth was dry and parched, and there was a hot aching rim round her eyes, which no longer wept. She was roused by the sound of wheels under her window; Charles Oakley's dog-cart was being taken to the hall door. Eva raised herself in bed. From it she could see the drive, the window being opposite. In a few minutes the vehicle, with the two gentlemen in it, appeared in sight, the servant walking in advance to open the gate. Very slowly they proceeded along the approach; as soon as they

had advanced sufficiently far for the projecting gables of the house not to obstruct the view of Eva's window, which was situated in one of the recesses, Ernest turned round and looked up into it. Even at that distance, she could see that his face was very pale, its expression very sorrowful; one long look of adieu, and the laurel-trees hid him from her sight. It was thus they parted. Eva lay back upon the bed. A cold feeling of desolation spread over her, something akin to that with which we see the corpse depart from the house where it shall be *no more* seen; the warm feelings crushed back upon her heart seemed to freeze upon it; she closed her eyes, and lay almost senseless with the icy oppression.

Eva continued too ill that day for any conversation with her to be practicable. Once Miss Boare had stolen to her bedside, and, with her usual wary look round the room, to make sure no one heard, said—

“Eva, my dear, this is a bad business; can nothing be done?”

“Nothing.”

“Are you sure, Eva?”

“Quite sure: he told me himself he wished it ended.”

Miss Boare forthwith began to inveigh against him, but Eva's agonized gesture stopped her. Love lingers at the shrine after Hope is in the tomb.

CHAPTER XVI.

FAREWELL.

THE change in Ernest's demeanour to her, which had appeared so sudden to Eva, was, in effect, the work of time,—time and influence. During the walk to the railway station, in which, the reader is aware, his father had accompanied him on his last visit to Hislop, the old gentleman had accused him of having formed a clandestine engagement with his cousin. This Ernest denied, and with truth; but when his father gave the Herberts as his authority, and placed before him numberless evidences with which they had supplied him, he owned that, though he had formed no engagement, he had regarded Eva with a more than cousinly interest. It was this confession which had caused the ebullition of temper referred to by Ernest in his conversation with Eva. This once subsided, Mr. Clifton took perhaps the best method with one of his son's temperament. He represented

to him that he was doing wrong. He remonstrated with him on the injustice of engaging his cousin's affections when it would not be in his power to requite them. Such a proposition as its ever being in his power, he never for one moment suffered to appear in the whole tenor of his discourse; he spoke of it as a thing he would not listen to. He added, that Ernest's visits to Hislop were unpleasant to the Herberts, who wished them discontinued so long as Eva remained their guest. Mr. Clifton's authority was always submitted to by his eldest son, who looked upon so doing as a matter of duty.

The substance of this conversation he wished to communicate by letter to Eva. He thought it the more honourable and straightforward measure to make her acquainted with it at once. This opinion his father combated: he said it was desirable to attach as little importance as possible to antecedents; as Ernest had not committed himself, there was no occasion to do so: until a man proposed he was free. He said also that the Herberts were particularly anxious not to appear in the affair, and wished Eva never to know they had interfered; and moreover, a formal breaking off of the connection would render unpleasant, if

not wholly put a stop to her contemplated visit to Oakstone. He represented that it would come less hard on her to relinquish hopes from which she was gradually weaned, and therefore recommended his son to make no remark, to abstain from going to Hislop, and, by degrees, to discontinue the correspondence. To this advice Ernest reluctantly consented, and under its influence was written the letter which had caused Eva so much dissatisfaction. Her answer to that letter was so mournfully tender that Ernest could not bring himself to inflict further pain, and he wrote in his former manner in reply: then came Eva's illness, and he could not aggravate it; thus the correspondence continued on its usual footing, Ernest hoping that his temporary absence would prepare her for a more lasting one. But there he sadly miscalculated; Eva's heart dwelt wholly on him, and in those hours of pain and loneliness turned with longing fondness to the time when they should be again united.

Whilst Ernest thus tried to deal judiciously with Eva, and repair as much as possible the effects of his indiscretion, no slight conflict went on in his own breast; love for the fair girl herself, pity for the sorrow he felt he was accumulating

for her, dread lest he was not acting with openness and integrity, at the same time agitated his breast. Many times he went down to Oakstone to talk it over with Eva's bosom friend, Agnes. To Agnes, her father had revealed, on his return from Hislop, all the circumstances with which he himself was acquainted. Her astonishment was unbounded: the most remote idea of such a contingency had never entered her head; once put there, she could see that she had been very inobservant. Much as she loved Eva, this was a sacrifice she was not prepared to make; it would be the overthrow of her own darling scheme of the heiress: now she understood why Eva refused to further that project; she joined her father heart and hand in endeavouring to oppose the other.

Her opportunity of doing so was greatly improved by the confidence which Ernest reposed in her; and in her conversations with him, she brought forward a tact which no one would have given her the credit of possessing. Her first object was to disencumber his mind of all supposition that any engagement subsisted between him and Eva: how could there, she argued, when he had not made any; and Eva, she was sure, was too sensible and worldly-wise to build without a foundation. If

people did that, the slightest attentions might for ever run the risk of being converted into a serious matter: where was the boundary to be drawn? Ernest she exonerated from all blame; it was natural he should show civility and attention to a gay lively relative he was in the habit of meeting, and if Eva ever had misconstrued it, her elastic spirits would quickly rebound, even if they admitted a momentary depression. She gave her brother the same advice his father had given him; to let the affair drop as quietly as possible, to preserve a guarded reticence with respect to his past sentiments, and not, by any exculpation of himself, to acknowledge an inference he had never authorised.

Constant dropping will wear a stone. These opinions, contrary as they were to those Ernest had at first entertained, began, in time, to take effect. Palliation of one's own fault has an infectious as well as soothing tendency; he, too, began to think that until a man actually committed himself by a proposal he was free. Often in Agnes's conversations with him she incidentally adverted to Eva's inadaptation for the life of a curate's wife, alluded to her refined tastes, her expensive inclinations, her love of show and

splendour, and intimated the likelihood of her feeling the prescribed duties of a moderate income an irksome task ; then she warily hinted at the slenderness of Ernest's income, which by a marriage with Eva would receive no addition, while the demands on it would be doubled ; and a reference to the Edward Phillipses was artfully dropped. All this was not without its weight with Ernest, with whose own opinion it, in many ways, coincided. He determined, though not without a painful struggle, to give Eva up.

Both his father and Agnes, with a latent dread of Eva's influence on him, suggested that he could do so with less violence to his own feelings by not seeing her again ; Mr. Clifton offered him the necessary funds, and engaged to get his parochial duties served, if he wished to leave the neighbourhood for the period of Eva's visit to Oakstone. But this Ernest would not consent to. Though he might not stand committed, he knew full well that he had given cause for the hopes which were now to be dashed ; and he would not abandon them in that unfeeling manner. It was his ardent wish, if possible, to remain on terms of friendly intimacy with his cousin, and for that he meant to plead ; though he had misgivings of Eva's feelings

not being too deeply engaged to admit of it. On seeing his heart so bent on it, his father had acquiesced in his desire to meet Eva once more, and the meeting was arranged, which ended so disastrously. Both father and son appeared to have taken neither their own feelings nor Eva's into their consideration, and the result had been most calamitous. They argued as if all three were impassible beings and mere machines. Eva, in perfect ignorance of any change having taken place in her lover's sentiments, in the full tide of love, and hope, and trust, was to receive neglect and indifference at his hands, without making any remark or evincing any disappointment; Ernest was to smother all feeling within his breast, and show no consideration for the being on whom he had, for months, been lavishing all his tenderness; and while he thus acted, he was to appear indifferent and at his ease: old Mr. Clifton was to look on at the issue of his wisdom and to see that it was good. Very differently things had turned out, as might easily have been foreseen by the agency of a very slight exercise of common-sense.

Mr. Clifton, seeing the failure of his designs in the conduct of the two young people, had become seriously uneasy: it was apparent that the feelings

of both were more deeply engaged than he had anticipated. Naturally timid and excitable, he took alarm at every word they exchanged. When he remonstrated with his son, he did not receive the same implicit deference as usual ; Ernest, conscious of the pain he was inflicting, defended the propriety of dealing gently with Eva's feelings, and would not aggravate their distress by withdrawing himself as entirely as his father required. The latter became exasperated with the resistance he encountered, and the dread of the consummation he opposed, until, at length, he could no longer contain himself, and matters were brought to a climax by his violence. A disputation, very stormy on the elder Mr. Clifton's part, had taken place that night in Ernest's room, before his going to bed. It ended in his threatening to leave his son a beggar if he disobeyed him, and forbidding him ever to enter the house so long as his cousin remained in it.

A few very uncomfortable days passed at Oakstone after Ernest's departure. Eva was unable to leave her bed ; she neither ate nor spoke ; when alone, she wept unceasingly, but when anyone was present she dried away her tears, and lay silent and impassive. A household circle

experiences a great blank when a spirit so bright as Eva's is suddenly struck down ; moreover, all felt that Ernest had left in sorrow, and was alone and desolate. Mr. Clifton, when his excitement abated, was provoked at the *exposé* he had made ; and though he believed it to be unavoidable, felt regret at the sorrow he had been obliged to inflict. Agnes was grieved because so many dear to her were unhappy ; Miss Boare felt disappointed, and was sorry she had chosen so unlucky a time to pay her visit. Myra, who used her eyesight, though she was not admitted into confidence, wished they would have let Ernest and Eva marry and be comfortable ; the younger ones did not trouble themselves much, but they did wish that no blight had come to make Eva the shade instead of the sunshine of the house. Poor little Arlette, who knew something was the matter, without being able to guess what it was, every now and then was used to creep into Eva's room and silently kiss her ; and once when she found her asleep with the tears undried upon her cheek, she stealthily knelt down behind the bed-curtain, and prayed to God to make cousin Eva happy.

During this time Agnes was a frequent visitor to Eva's bedside. With her Ernest had left a

parting injunction to do what she could to soothe and comfort the heart he had left so deeply wounded. Not that Eva ever knew of his consideration; though perhaps it would have been the most consoling influence her condition would have admitted. Agnes, in her intercourse with her unhappy cousin, never revealed anything which she esteemed might be conducive to nourish a flame she wished extinguished, or to lead Eva to suppose that a reciprocal one existed within Ernest's breast.

In extenuation of her father's violence, Agnes urged the alarm which had been raised in his mind during his last visit to Hislop; and then, for the first time, Eva learned that Mrs. Herbert had written for him, expressly to represent the suspicions she entertained of an attachment between the two cousins; and, more than that, to urge the disadvantages of such an alliance for Ernest, and to recommend the adoption of speedy and stringent measures to put an end to an intimacy, the notoriety of which she illustrated from Mrs. Norreys' conversation. That she had taken these steps she wished carefully to be concealed from Eva. Scarcely could Eva believe it, scarcely her heart receive it. Cold, selfish,

and prejudiced in her opinions she believed her aunt to be ; she expected no assistance from her, but she did not think that she would thus deliberately injure her : and to do it in that underhand, treacherous manner — a veritable stab in the dark ! Thus to blight her prospects, sap her hopes, and plot against her happiness—thus to send her, an unwelcome guest, to Oakstone, in perfect ignorance of the reception she had prepared for her ! Had she no feeling, no tenderness, no pity for the mortification, no remorse for the misery she was piling on her ? She thought over the months they had spent together, all the kindly intercourse that had existed between them, the tie of blood, the claim of guest,—all violated, and in secret. The only motive she could assign for her aunt's disingenuous conduct, other than her animosity to marriage in general, was her rooted aversion to the acquisition of any relatives into her neighbourhood, except those who were possessed of worldly advantages ; but when she heard that Mr. Herbert had warmly supported his wife's interference, and been, in a great measure, her mouthpiece, a thought was confirmed which had once passed, a fleeting shadow through her brain, that he designed Ernest to

be Clara Neville's husband. It was not an unlikely thing: her wealth would raise Ernest's social position, which, as the head of her family, would be a desirable object to Mrs. Herbert, while his high character and amiable disposition, would be to Mr. Herbert a guarantee of his ward's being well-treated. When this conjecture first came into Eva's head she mentioned it to Agnes, who happened to be seated by her bed. Agnes, at first, repudiated it as most unlikely, but afterwards, by the way her conversation reverted to it, Eva could see it dwelt upon her mind. She made many inquiries about Clara's appearance and attainments, and wished that she, instead of Myra, had gone to Hislop to meet her, that she might have been enabled to judge for herself.

Though Agnes did not exactly acknowledge the counteractive influence she had herself used with Ernest, she said enough to betray, to one of acute perception like Eva, much of the part she had taken, and frequently, in the course of conversation, her warning precepts accidentally became divulged. Eva did not reproach her; their interests were antagonistic, and Agnes had preferred her own; Eva did not blame her, but she ceased to love her.

“ I extravagant !” she thought ; “ if ever Agnes wanted to practise an economy or plan a contrivance it was to me she came to learn how it was to be done. *Et tu Brute !* ”

A still further source of estrangement between her and Agnes was derived from the knowledge she acquired of the latter having written to urge her brother to break off his correspondence with his deserted love. This he did in a letter enclosed to his sister ; a letter which spoke harshly to a bleeding heart, though the writer was far from intending it. In it he thanked her gratefully for the letter she had given him at their last meeting : he praised its gentleness, its kindness, and its wisdom (he said nothing about its self-abnegation, though doubtless, that was the feature most for his benefit) ; he took a final leave of her and wished her all happiness in this world and the next — Eva smiled bitterly as she read : he concluded by petitioning to have his former letters destroyed, as they were so filled with communications of a private nature, many of them connected with other people. To destroy those letters was a task Eva was not equal to ; they had been so cherished, those records of an affection so suddenly wrenched from her ; but she would not retain them against his

wish. Without reading, and scarcely trusting herself to look at them, she packed them up to send to him as soon as she should be able to carry them herself to the post.

As soon as she was able to leave her bed, she resolved on leaving Oakstone. Both her uncle and Agnes tried to dissuade her, but in vain ; there was a firm resolve in her cold eye that told she would not be gainsaid. Mr. Clifton, who thought her unfit to travel alone, wished to accompany her to Bristol, and see her on board ; but she declined his offer with a coldness that made him unwilling to press it. She concealed the extent of her illness lest it should bring importunity on her, and with great difficulty, but without assistance, made the preparations for her journey. She was fortunate in having only partially unpacked her boxes on her arrival at Oakstone.

Short as was the distance to the railway station, to walk it was now beyond the powers of Eva's strength ; the carriage was ordered to take her there, and it was arranged that Miss Boare and Charles Clifton should accompany her so far. Different this to her usual partings, when her buoyant step rushed lightly though the house, bidding a half-smiling, half-tearful adieu to everything and

every one, all the while talking cheerily of renewed meetings. Calm, cold, and composed, were her leave-takings. A muscle did not move in that pale face as she gave her hand to her uncle—gave it as it had been a stone—no warm pressure in its clasp; she lightly touched with her lips the cheek of each weeping cousin, stepped into the carriage without looking right or left, and drove away without one backward glance at the familiar place she was leaving for *aye*. For *aye*, as one of that young band, whose habits, tastes, and affections had been so kindred; whose confidences so frank, whose intercourse so replete with pleasure: for *aye*, as the loved companion, the gentle counsellor, the untiring friend: for *aye*, all those communions of heart, the accumulations of years, breaking into hopeful visions of the future and dwelling on sunny memories of the past: all genial tenderness, all social intimacy, all unison of the brighter and holier essences of our nature,—passed away *for aye*. A curtain, dark as a funeral pall, had dropped between her heart and them, never more to be lifted until another world lay beyond: a world where no interests jar and no sorrows penetrate.

CHAPTER XVII.

ILLNESS.

WHEN the Bristol packet moored at the North-wall in Dublin; after the passengers had landed, the stewardess went on deck to consult the captain on what was to be done with a lady who lay so ill in her berth that it was impossible to rouse her.

“Sea-sickness?” he asked.

“No, sir. She appeared ill when she came on board. She neither moves nor speaks—has not eaten a morsel since we sailed; I gave her brandy two or three times.”

The captain, a rough, weather-beaten old tar, but a humane, kind-hearted man, went down to the cabin to see what was the matter. He found the lady still lying in apparent insensibility. Lifting her up in his arms, he seated himself on the side of the berth, supporting her against his shoulder while he forced some brandy and water

between her livid lips. It seemed to revive her a little ; she unclosed her eyes and looked wonderfully in the rough face that bent kindly over her.

“ Had you no friends on board, my child ? ” he asked.

“ No.”

“ Where are they ? ”

“ I do not know.” Her head again sunk upon his shoulder ; he gave her some more brandy.

“ Where are you going, my dear ? Try to answer me.”

“ Home.”

“ Where is your home ? ”

“ In Cavan.”

“ Cavan ! you never could get there. Do you know any people in Dublin ? ”

“ No,—yes,—no ; only one.”

His ear could scarcely catch the faint articulation.

“ Is it a lady ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ You had better go to her. Where does she live ? ”

“ I want to go home.”

“ Impossible. You could not travel to Cavan

as you are. You would not reach it alive.
Where does this lady live?"

"In Haddington Road."

"What number?"

No answer.

"Try to recollect, my child."

"No 2."

"Put on her things" (to the stewardess), "I will send one of the men for a cab."

In a short time he returned. Eva seemed to have been roused by the exertion of being dressed; with the assistance of the captain's arm she got upon deck.

"I am going on the quay with you," said her conductor, as she tried to thank him, "I want you to see if you have all your luggage safe. See here, these three boxes, and a carpet bag. Look at them, that's a good child. Are they right?"

A very faint "yes," was the reply.

"Had you nothing else? No loose parcels?"

"No."

"Here, my man" (to the driver), "take care of this lady, she is a particular friend of mine, and take her safely to No. 2, Haddington Road."

"Never fear, yer honor; it's I that'll take

her safe and aisy, or my name's not Pat Hoolaghan."

"Let's see your number, much more consequence than your name: 1067, very good; one and sixpence is the fare."

"Arrah, yer honor, the lady'll make it the even money, if I take her tindherly."

"Eighteen pence is the fare. If I find you ask more, remember your number is 1067."

The good-natured sailor shook hands with his charge, wished her a speedy recovery, and returned to his ship.

Number 2, Haddington Road was the residence of Mrs. Stanhope—Mrs. Hamilton Stanhope, she bore on her card, and delighted in being called. Mrs. Stanhope, years ago, had been married to George Desmond, a brother of Eva's father, who had inherited a small property from a maternal uncle, which he settled on his wife, the lady in question, for her life. This George having died six months after his marriage, his widow married again; her second choice was the rector of the parish. It was a small living, but with the jointure of the former marriage, 150*l.* a year, the Stanhopes were able to live comfortably. On the birth of a son, Mr. Stan-

hope insured his life for 1,500*l.* He died of fever, contracted while visiting the sick in his ministering capacity.

Mrs. Stanhope then removed to Dublin and took a house in the airy outlet we have named. She educated her only son, then ten years old, liberally. Amidst many oddities, her mind possessed one sterling quality; she esteemed education as the great necessity of life. She brought her son up to the profession of his father, and he was now curate of a parish in the county of Armagh. The interest of the 1,500*l.* received from the insurance company, she had always scrupulously devoted to his education, the purpose for which his father had intended it; and she now continued it to him as an allowance, that he might be enabled to live more comfortably than would be possible on a curate's stipend; reserving for herself only the 150*l.* jointure, which, at her death, was to revert to the Desmond family. Her house, though small, was airy and commodious, and very tastefully fitted up. It consisted of two drawing-rooms opening into each other, above these were three bedrooms; in the return was a dining-room, of not much pretension, with a servant's attic over it.

There was besides, a basement story, from which you ascended by a few steps to a small garden, long and narrow, like all town gardens, and into which the windows of the back drawing-room looked. The Venetian blind of the window in the front drawing-room was always not only down but shut: the sun being strong on that window in the morning, Mrs. Stanhope could not be divested of the idea that at all times the light received through it must be injurious to furniture, and she therefore carefully excluded it.

It was in this dark front drawing-room that Charles Stanhope was in the habit of sitting and reading when he was on a visit to his mother. He was secure from interruption; Mrs. Stanhope never entered that room unless to satisfy herself that the blind was closed, and no visitor was ever admitted. Few came; Mrs. Stanhope was always out: and as people soon get tired of calling at a house where they are never let in, her acquaintance generally made an apology when they met her, suffice for a call, or dropped an occasional card at the door just to save themselves. At the time we write of, Charles was at his mother's, spending a holiday; if holiday could be called what was spent over books.

Charles Stanhope was a book-worm. Thirst after knowledge had characterized him from a boy; but beyond the mere act of acquiring it he did not progress; he seemed to make no use of it. At school and college he carried all before him, so far as answering went; all that the books contained he appeared to have transferred into the storehouse of his brain: it was wonderful what hoards of knowledge he had collected there; to every question asked, his lips gave the ready reply. But there it ended; he made no further use of it to distinguish himself. No prize-essay claimed him as its author, no startling declamation showed the rich stores he had to draw from; and now, at the age of thirty, with a fund of learning that would grace a bishopric, he was an obscure and hard-working curate on 100*l.* a year. Some reason for this might be found in the organization of his mind: its powers were more collective than creative; but that he had never made them constructive, was perhaps sufficient proof that energy commensurate to his abilities did not coexist. To external appearances he was perfectly indifferent; as might be guessed from one glance at his outward man. Talk of Edward Phillips! he was a spruce well-

dressed man to Charles Stanhope, whose ill-made clothes hung on him as on a peg; his long lank hair seemed never to have been asked to grow in any other way than it liked, his badly kept whiskers always looked untidy and uncurled. His face was not plain—no face could be plain with those large, dark, thinking eyes; even when they gazed in vacancy, it seemed in intense thought, as if they could see nothing without because they were searching so deeply into something within: when he smiled (which was but seldom, the habitual expression of his face being rigidly grave) there was a mild kindness in his look that betokened a good and gentle disposition.

Charles was an early riser. It was before the breakfast hour, and he had already been long over his books, seated in his usual place behind the Venetian blind in the front drawing-room, when a knock, so loud that it roused even him to hear it, was heard at the street door. A double knock was not a usual occurrence at his mother's door at that hour. Charles raised one lath of the blind with his finger and saw a cab standing at the gate of the front garden, the driver of which cab was assisting a lady to descend from it. He saw that

the lady moved slowly and with difficulty. Believing it to be a mistake, he went out to prevent her having the fruitless labour of mounting the high steps. She had got to the foot of them when he reached the door, and had stopped, evidently not having strength to ascend. He ran down to meet her.

“This is Mrs. Stanhope’s house,” he said, gently, but a little awkwardly. The lady bowed her head, but did not speak. He hesitated a moment, then offered his arm, which she took. With a great and painful exertion she ascended slowly, step by step. He lent her all the strength he could in support, but their progress was very slow. The hall gained, she sunk into a chair near the door; she tried to speak, but no sound issued from her parted lips; she opened her hand and seemed to wish to direct his attention to a purse within it; he did not know whether he was to take it, and asked her what he should do. Making a great effort she said audibly, “I am Eva Desmond;” and, as if all her strength was expended in the exertion, she fell back senseless against the wall. Charles knew who Eva was, though he did not know her appearance. She had occasionally stopped with his mother, on her way through

Dublin ; but he had never been at home, and had never seen her. He put his hand to her shoulder to prevent her falling off the chair.

“Run up for my mother, Ellen,” he said to the old servant. “Bring in the luggage” (to the cabman) “and I will settle with you. What is it?”

“Arrah, sure yer honor, the Captin promised me a round half-crown if I’d bring the lady safe, and look after her along the road, she being so delicate ; an’ shure, ’twas I that did ; got down ev’ry turnin to see iv she was on the sate, o’ fear she’d fall, or any misforhune happen her. It’s the lady herself could tell yer honor ; only she’s so bad like, a body ’d be loath to tormint her wid quistions.”

The duped scholar paid the half-crown.

“Faicks iv I thought he’d have gev it so aisy I’d have axed double : all his sinse went into his hair,” was Pat Hoolaghan’s soliloquy as he drove off in quest of another fare.

“Eva, my child ! is this you ?” exclaimed Mrs. Stanhope running down the stairs in her dressing-gown. “La, Charles, what is the matter ? She was bright as a rose last time she was here. Seasickness it must be. Oh, that nasty sea ! I always

dreaded it. What shall we do with her, Charlie dear?"

"Put her to bed, if you ask me; she appears very ill."

"Well, carry her up, Charlie, dear, and we will pop her into my bed; I am only just out of it, and she will be warm and cozy there, and can sleep off whatever ails her."

"I expect more ails her than she can easily sleep off," said Charles; who, in his capacity as minister, had become conversant with sickness. He lifted her in his arms and carried her up the stairs. "She is but a light weight," he said, as he deposited her on his mother's bed.

"Now, Charlie, dear, do you run down, and I will be with you in two minutes to breakfast; just when I get this poor girl to bed. What shall I give her—a drop of wine? There is some in the locker; ah, no! I forgot, I finished that. Brandy I have heard is good; there is none in the house, but whiskey would do just as well, wouldn't it, Charlie?"

"Do not think of giving her whiskey; take off her clothes, and if she does not come to, bathe her face with cold water. We shall see how she is, presently." He left the room.

“ Does she give any sign of recovery ? ” he asked, when his mother joined him at breakfast.

“ Not a sign ; lies like a corpse : I left Ellen with her. Could sea-sickness affect her so, after it was over ? ”

“ I do not know. Her hand is hot and harsh. I am inclined to think there is fever about her.”

“ Fever !—and in my bed ! ”

Mrs. Stanhope was a good-hearted, good-natured, little woman ; she would do many a turn to oblige a friend or befriend the friendless, but her good-nature had limits. There were some points on which she would make no concession. Her love for the air was one. She was a being of the air : an air-plant ; she lived in it ; nothing would keep her out of it—no tie, no duty, no weather. The whole world might lie down and die if their living depended on her stopping in the house. Her fear of infection was another unconquerable point—*infection of all kinds, fever in particular.* Both her husbands had died of it : she had never entered their rooms when once she found it was an infectious fever. She seemed quite taken aback now.

“ What shall I do, Charles ? ” she said.

“ You have nothing to do. Wait until she gets

back consciousness, then, if it prove necessary, you can send for a doctor."

"Who shall I send for? I am sure I don't know."

"Doctors are very plentiful in Dublin," replied her son.

"Charles, I won't send for any of those high-flyers. You see, my dear, I don't know the Desmonds' circumstances. They may not be able to pay exorbitant fees. Dr. Beattie is a very clever apothecary, and a reasonable man."

"Send for who you like; but if it is fever, as I suspect it is, you will want some one at once."

"But if it is fever, Charles, she cannot stop here."

"Stop here she must; you would not put her out in the street. She has a claim of relationship on you."

"A mere nominal one: it is so long since poor George Desmond —" she did not pursue that melancholy subject. "If I found it was fever, Charlie, I would take lodgings for her and hire a nurse."

"You could not, mother. The very walls would cry shame on you for such a violation of every Christian duty. To put a young unconscious

thing like her, after seeking your protection, from under your roof, and intrust her to the care of a hireling nurse, the most known reprobates in Dublin! do not think that I will consent to it."

Mrs. Stanhope looked puzzled. When Charles spoke that way he always cowed her.

"I wish she had never come here," she said.

"Make the best of it now: after all, there may be no risk whatever. Had you not better go and see how she is?"

Mrs. Stanhope went. Eva had opened her eyes, but she did not appear to recognise any one or anything. She murmured a few incoherent words. Mrs. Stanhope ran out of the room.

"Do go for Dr. Beattie, Charles," she exclaimed, in excitement.

"Is she worse?" asked her son, looking less impassive than usual.

"Raving, my dear!"

"Had you not better have her carried into another room? You will be afraid to sleep there with her. Put her in my bed, and I can have the spare one got ready."

"My dear, I would not sleep in that room to-night for a hundred guineas! No use infecting two rooms. I would not even sleep in the room

next to her. I will go into Ellen's attic and make Ellen sleep with her."

"A very good plan: no matter about Ellen."

"Why, Charles, some one must mind her."

"And the fever may not be a bit infectious after all."

"All fevers are infectious: I have reason to know about fevers. There was your poor dear father carried off for want of precaution on his own part; often I warned him: and poor George Desmond —"

"That was a long time ago, you know," said her son, cynically.

"Don't torment me, darling. Now go for Dr. Beattie, and tell him he will find me in the garden after he has seen Eva. Was not it fortunate, Charlie, I happened to bring my bonnet and shawl out of the room when I was coming down this morning?"

"That was fortunate," said Charles; "you would be badly off if *they* were infected."

"And, Charlie, dear, you had better keep out of the house too, until we hear what Dr. Beattie says; you could come from his house to me through the back-door of the garden. What should I do if you got ill?"

“ Why, if I was too ill to make any resistance, I suppose you would put me out of the house; if I was not, and resisted, you would run out of it yourself and leave me to my fate.”

“ Ah, Charlie, dear, you know I would not; so don’t go in the way of danger.”

“ How often am I on my knees beside the bed of typhus ? ”

“ That was the way your father went on, and lost his life.”

“ We must all part with life when it is demanded from us; I trust when my summons comes it will find me in the path of duty: duty now is the care of this sick girl.”

Charles Stanhope brought Dr. Beattie back with him and led him up to his mother’s room. Eva was again unconscious. The pale fair face looked very beautiful, as it lay back still as death upon the pillow. Dr. Beattie took in his one of the slight hands which lay extended on the coverlet, and felt for the pulse.

“ Get me some bread,” he said, quickly, “ some old bread.”

Ellen went to fetch it.

“ Low fever,” muttered the doctor, as he kept his finger on the wrist, “ a great deal of it inani-

tion—she evidently has not tasted food for long.”

He broke the bread in a cup of water, and taking up pinches of it in his finger and thumb, began forcing it between the closed lips.

“There can be no infection in a fever like this?” said Charles.

“Not a particle, sir; you might sleep in the bed with her. But she is ill, very ill. It seems to have been brought on by fatigue and fasting, and most likely some prior cause, distress of mind or some such thing: do you know her history of late, sir?”

“No, I never saw her before; she is a friend of my mother’s, and was almost as you see her when she came here this morning.”

“Delicate frame of body. Very slightly formed. I will make up some medicine and send it; meanwhile, my good woman, keep putting this bread into her mouth every now and then, just as you see me do. Don’t mind whether she likes it or not, it is good for her.”

“Would not wine be of use if she is so exhausted?” asked Charles.

“Not yet. We must not venture wine yet. Something milder. A little light nourishment—

milk and soda water—whey—arrowroot. You must bear in mind she is *very* ill; will require care; she has let herself run too long."

"A bad house she has come to if she requires care," thought Charles; "between my mother's love of the air and fear of infection, she is not calculated to make a good nurse." He determined to look after the invalid himself.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NURSE TENDING.

DR. BEATTIE's assurances, backed by her son's exhortations of duty, succeeded in allaying Mrs. Stanhope's fears sufficiently to induce her to look after Eva, who for some days continued in a state of almost total prostration, rarely opening her eyes; when she did unclose them she did not appear to recognise any one: once or twice she murmured her mother's name, but more as one who dreamt than was conscious.

“Had we not better send for her mother?” said Charles.

“No, my dear, not on any account—filling the house in that way—very likely she would want a nurse, and no end of things. I did not even tell her how bad Eva was, for fear she would want to come. We can mind her very well ourselves: she does not want much; lies quite quiet and contented.”

“ Quiet she surely lies, God help her ! ”

Dr. Beattie became uneasy at the length of time she continued unconscious.

“ I shall be sorry to divest this young face of so great an ornament,” he said, taking in his hand one of the long silken tresses which lay upon the pillow, “ but if reason does not speedily return, it must be done, and the head blistered.”

But reason returned in time to save the hair. Dr. Beattie’s remedies appeared to get the disorder under, and the fever slowly subsided. Charles saw that the medicines were administered. Even in the night, he came to the door at the appointed hour to remind old Ellen of the draught or powder.

Mrs. Stanhope nursed Eva, fitfully, as she did everything. She came into her room in the morning, fed her kindly, gave her her physic, that is any of it she did not spill, and provided any little necessary she saw wanting ; but then she went out, and for four or five hours would not enter the house again. With a book under her shawl she was off to the College gardens, pacing their avenues for hours, at the rate of a rood an hour, intent upon her book. She believed herself to be a *savante*, though she was in effect singularly

ignorant: it was most miraculous how a person who read so much could contrive to imbibe so little information. She read out of doors because she believed air to be as essential to life as food. Her window was always open; fain would she have kept Eva's so: twice the doctor found the sash up against his orders.

“My dear madam, you are doing a rash thing for yourself; you will give her an inflammation of the chest, and in her state, in ninety cases out of a hundred, inflammation turns to typhus fever: the most infectious of all fevers.”

He never found the window open after.

Charles read prayers every morning to his mother and old Ellen.

“I think,” said he, as he took up the book one day, “now that she can comprehend it, we ought to read a prayer to that sick girl.”

“Well, my dear, come up and read them in her room.”

“These prayers! no, they are not fit for her. I have a book of prayers for the sick; after breakfast, we will go up and pray with her.”

“Miss Desmond, I have come to ask if you would like me to read prayers to you?” was the

perhaps rather abruptly put question of the man of limited intercourse with ladies.

Eva had just awoke from a dose. She looked up and saw the tall clerical looking figure standing by the bed. Mrs. Stanhope was on the other side.

“Are you a clergyman?” she asked, looking bewildered.

“I am.”

Her eyes sought Mrs. Stanhope.

“Am I very ill?” she asked, anxiously.
“Does the doctor say I am very ill?”

“No, my dear child, he says you are better.
Don’t you feel so yourself?”

“Yes; but I thought when a clergyman was sent for —”

“I was not sent for; you mistake, Miss Desmond. I am Charles Stanhope; don’t you know you saw me when you first came? I read prayers every day for my mother, and as you are not well enough to read yourself, I thought you might like me to do it for you.”

Eva did not comprehend all he said; she had no recollection of him, but she seemed satisfied and lay still. He knelt beside the bed and selected a prayer for a person who was confidently expected

to recover. It finished with an appeal for grace to spend the life spared profitably to salvation. Eva seemed soothed; and from that day Charles read prayers to her morning and evening.

“Read that nice prayer again,” she said, one day to him.

“What nice prayer?”

“The prayer you read first, about people recovering and growing good.”

Charles thought he heard a sob one morning as he passed her door, on his way to his room for a book. He opened the door and went in. Eva was crying.

“What is the matter, Miss Desmond? Can I do anything for you?”

She looked distressed, asked for a drink. He gave her one, but she only tasted it.

“I do not think it was this you wanted,” he said, laying down the cup. “Can I not do something else for you?”

Eva hesitated.

“Do not be shy of asking for what you want. Is it anything that I can do?”

“I do not like being by myself,” said poor Eva, at last, looking rather ashamed of what she was saying.

“ My mother is out, and Ellen is busy. Shall I bring my book ? I can read it here.”

“ Yes, please.”

He fetched it and placed himself at the foot of the bed.

“ Do not sit there ; sit where I can see you.”

He moved his chair into the corner of the room, in shade from the window but in sight of the bed, and opened his book.

Eva seemed contented ; she opened her eyes once or twice to make sure she was not alone, then fell asleep. Hours passed. Mrs. Stanhope entered ; she seemed amazed to see her son in the corner of the room.

“ Has she been long asleep ?” she asked.

“ I do not know ; I have not looked up this long time. She felt nervous at being alone, so I brought my book here where she could see me.”

“ A very good plan, dear ; you are so much in the house it is no punishment to you to sit here. But I could not do it—*could* not ; I must be in the air : I feel it the moment I give it up.”

“ I did not know you ever gave it up. Between you and Ellen, do you think you can mind her till dinner time ? for I want to go out.”

“ Oh, yes, Charlie, dear, do go out. You are

not half enough in the air ; I wish I could impress its valuable qualities more upon you.”

“ Considering I trudge through it for seven or eight hours every day in the week at Lurgan, I ought to be acquainted with all its qualities, good or bad : I know it often has very wetting ones.”

“ You should guard against wet, Charles ; nothing induces fever like wet clothes. Now, of a wet day, I stroll up and down the garden with a large umbrella over me : keep moving, however slowly, and you ’ll never take cold.”

“ That would do my business well. It is time for that girl’s medicine.”

“ Better not awake her : sleep is medicine.”

“ She does not wake.”

He prepared the draught,滑 his arm under her head, and poured the physic down her throat : she was only roused sufficiently to swallow it.

Eva got better, even with what nursing she had. Dr. Beattie now spoke seriously to Charles about the necessity of her taking nourishment with regularity.

“ This is the critical time,” said he, “ when the strength, robbed by the disease, is to be paid back by nourishment. Mrs. Stanhope is so much out,

it is absolutely necessary some one should see that long lapses of time do not intervene without food being administered ; a delicate frame, weak from illness, is open to consumption and all sorts of diseases."

Charles set about collecting nourishment. His mother's was a bad house for it. In it were never any dainties ; an abstemious liver herself, she provided good wholesome food for Charles, and nothing more. She abhorred cooking, thought it most pernicious to the health : there was no air to be had over a kitchen fire ; it would kill her. So Charles tried, with what assistance he could get from Ellen, to cook himself. But he was a novice at the trade, and Ellen by no means an adept ; unpalatable messes enough, for the faded appetite of an invalid, they hashed up between them. When Eva rejected them and did not eat, he spoke to her gravely of it as a matter of duty ; after that, she opened her mouth when he desired her and swallowed what he put into it. It was well for her she had him. He lay in bed late one morning ; he had sat up reading the night before. When he came down, he found his mother had gone to hear a fashionable morning preacher, leaving the teapot by the fire for him. He sat

down to breakfast; Mrs. Stanhope had forgotten to leave out the sugar, so he drank his tea without. He pulled a book out of his pocket and read while he breakfasted, and for long after; then he rose and went to Eva's room. He asked her how she felt. She had a headache. He read prayers, took his seat in the corner and pulled out his book.

“Have you breakfasted yet?” asked Eva.

“Long ago. I was down late; my mother had gone out before I went to breakfast.”

“I did not get any,” said Eva, after a while.

“Have you had no breakfast?”

“No.”

“Nothing to eat to-day?”

“No: I suppose Mrs. Stanhope forgot.”

He darted out of the room. The breakfast things were still on the table but there was not much to be had; he had drank all the tea. He ran out to the nearest shop and bought some tea and sugar; in his hurry, forgetting to desire Ellen to put the kettle on. At last all was collected. There was a pot of marmalade on the table, he spread some on a slice of bread and butter, cutting it into long thin strips, very delicate and lady-like looking he thought. But Eva was sick and

faint from exhaustion, and could not eat. She drank some tea, and in the course of the morning asked for some more. Charles was holding the cup to her lips, her head raised on his arm, when Mrs. Stanhope came in.

“ Oh, Charles, we had such a discourse from Mr. Putitwel ! So eloquent and so awakening ! He did not spare us. Every sin you could name he brought home to us.”

“ Did he say anything about the sin of starving sick people ? ” asked Charles, drily. “ Miss Desmond has had nothing to eat to-day.”

“ Eva, my child, did I forget you ? ” exclaimed Mrs. Stanhope, looking really frightened ; “ how could that be ? Ah ! Charles, I know. I was deep in that delightful book Mrs. Somers lent me, and I could not take my eyes off it : sure I let the toast burn and the egg boil over, so intent was I ; then suddenly I remembered the sermon (I would not have missed it for a pound note), I just threw on my bonnet and shawl and rushed off—that must be the way I forgot Eva ; I wonder Ellen did not think of her. Eva, my dear, I hope you are none the worse. Eat a tiny bit, my love.”

“ She is none the better,” said Charles, testily. “ Don’t worry her now ; let her rest.”

“Ah, rest is the best thing ; it is everything to an invalid.”

“You had better abandon that doctrine, or the invalid will soon be at rest.”

“Charlie, dear, I saw such a lovely trussed fowl at the poult erer’s as I passed to church. Great a hurry as I was in, I stopped and ordered it home, for I reflected it might be gone when I returned. We will have it for dinner ; I daresay Eva will be able to eat a wee bit.”

There was an odd expression about the corners of Charles’ grave mouth.

“It is a long time till dinner,” said he ; “when Miss Desmond rests she shall have some broth.”

“I am afraid, dear, there is no broth.”

“There is.”

“Where ?”

“In a saucepan on the fire.”

“What is in the saucepan ?”

“Chicken broth.”

“Where did you get the chicken ?”

“On the kitchen table.”

“Why, Charles, it must be the chicken I ordered home !”

“Very likely,” he replied, with imperturbable gravity.

The expression of Mrs. Stanhope's countenance was most comic.

"Oh, Charles, Charles, to put down my fat pullet when an old skinny hen would make ten times better broth!"

"But I had no skinny hen, unless I put down old Ellen," said he.

"Has it been long down?" A thought seemed to strike her; she turned quickly and left the room.

Charles leaned back against the wall and laughed outright. Eva had never seen him laugh before; she smiled faintly.

"You ought not to have boiled the chicken, Mr. Stanhope," she said, with gentle reproach,

"My mother is off to take it up," said he, "and she will find it in a mash. I pounded it in the mortar to get the good out of it," and again he laughed heartily.

He went back to his books. His face relapsed into its usual expression of grave thought. Eva slept.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONVALESCENCE.

EV^A was at last able to leave her bed. Dr. Beattie wished the air of her room changed; so when old Ellen had dressed her, Charles went in and carried her down to the sofa in the back drawing room. He returned to his old haunt, the dark front room, but he changed his seat to the opposite side of the table; his former place being out of sight of any one lying on the sofa in the room behind.

So passed many days, she lying idle on the sofa, he plunged into the depths of his books. Either seldom spoke. In the middle of the day he always went out, first seeing that his charge had what she required. (Long, sad, lonely hours Eva spent upon that sofa; heavy sorrow lying at her heart. But she never complained. That sorrow seemed to have crushed down all the energy of her nature—even restlessness: she appeared quite passive. That it had crushed out

all gladness from her heart, might be read in that pale, sad, altered face.)

No one, not even the mourner for the dead, knows the utter desolation of a heart suddenly deprived of a love it believed it held. The missing of those tender interchanges, those loving confidences, which exchanged even every idea, because they knew that an idea swelled into a thing of interest from the mere fact of its having been in *their* mind ; the longing desire to know the occupations and thoughts of one who, in spite of all, forms a part of your being, who *cannot* be crushed from memory ; the utter loneliness of the heart which feels that other heart still beats, and acts, and feels, but not for you : to you it is dead, though alive to others—*you*, who a few short days before formed a part of it, who had the most perfect right to enter it with everything connected with yourself, however slight—now, you have no part in it: you have no business intruding ; the door is closed to you, you have no right to knock—it would be no use—it would not open to you: this, this is desolation of the heart—this Eva felt.

She heard from Agnes. The letter had gone to Glenmore, where she was believed to be,

and Mrs. Desmond had forwarded it. It was torn open with feverish haste: now she should hear something; now there would be some break in the void; perhaps she should hear things he said and felt, at least, know how he did. Disappointment again—his name was never mentioned. Kind expressions of feeling for Eva were in the letter; regret (which was sincere) that any circumstance should have occurred to cloud her visit to Oakstone and cause her pain; but not one word to satisfy that gnawing longing for some intelligence of the loved one. Eva put aside the letter, silently; miles of estrangement, more numerous and irretraceable than the miles of distance she had travelled, springing from that hour between her and Agnes.

I have said that Eva and her self-constituted nurse seldom spoke; but one day, when he was giving her her lunch before she went out, she said,

“Where is it you go to every day, Mr. Stanhope?”

“To the Society House Library. Why?”

“Nothing; I was only wondering.”

A thought seemed to strike him.

“Are you lonely here?”

“Oh, no; I am never lonely.”

He went out, but returned.

“Miss Desmond, if you thought a turn would do you good, I would take you out.”

“Oh no, thank you; do not think of me: it does not matter.”

“I think it matters a great deal. Have you ever been in the College gardens, near here?”

“No.”

“Would you like to go there?”

Her face brightened a little, but she answered—

“No, thank you, Mr. Stanhope. I cannot think of taking up your time. You have done a great deal for me, and I am very grateful.”

“You have nothing to be grateful for: I have barely done my duty; but I should like to take you out now, if I thought you would like to go. Would you?”

“I should like it very much, but that I do not like worrying you.”

“Can Ellen get your things?”

“Yes, my travelling dress.”

Ellen brought them, and Charles helped her to put them on. Eva looked pleased; her pale face flushed deeply.

“I think I have been premature,” said Charles, as he marked the unnatural brightness of her

cheek ; " the College gardens are too much for the first day. Suppose we content ourselves with our own little garden to-day ? "

Eva's look fell, but she acquiesced at once.

" Do not be disappointed," said her guardian ; " if you bear to-day well, I will take you farther to-morrow : the patient must give way to the nurse a little longer."

They went into the garden. Eva sat on a chair old Ellen brought out, Charles pacing up and down the long walk with a book in his hand, until Ellen called to him that it was getting chill and he ought to help Miss Desmond in.

The next day he had a cab, and took Eva to the College gardens.

" There is a sunny seat just here," said Charles. " Lean on me ; it is but a little way to walk."

He placed her on a seat near the entrance to the inner garden, and threw a cloak over her.

" Are you comfortable ? "

" Yes, very, thank you."

" You had better open your parasol, the sun is on your head. I will stretch myself on this seat ; you can call me when you are tired."

He crossed the walk, lay on a seat opposite, with his face downwards, resting on his elbows, his

chin in his palms and a book before him. When Eva tired he went to call a cab, laying down his book beside her while he went. She took it up, it was Greek. As they walked slowly back to the door they had entered by, they saw Mrs. Stanhope in a far off part of the garden, taking steps an inch long and five minutes apart, a parasol over her head and an open book before her.

“They are the two greatest readers I ever heard of,” thought Eva, “and she seems to know nothing.”

A few days after this, Eva rose from her sofa, and walked into the front drawing-room where Charles sat reading, and standing by his side, said—

“Have you any book there, Mr. Stanhope, that I could read?”

“That you *could* read? yes, there are some English ones—that you *would* read? no; they are too abstruse.”

“You ought to be very learned,” said Eva, with a smile. “With what object do you read all these abstruse books?”

“With what object? why, to know what is in them.”

“ Yes ; of course, that is the immediate object, but have you no ulterior one ? You do not read all these books that your head is for ever bent over merely for the sake of knowing what is in them ? ”

“ I do ; it is knowledge.”

“ What use is it ? ”

“ A strange question. One learned writer has said, ‘ Knowledge is power.’ ”

“ Figuratively speaking, I suppose, because knowledge may be the stepping-stone to power, but for it to be so you must step on it. I have read, somewhere, that men are to be estimated not for what they know, but for what they are able to perform.”

“ Very likely. There is something of the kind in Ferguson’s Essays (the one on intellectual powers, I think,) but to distinguish yourself you must get an opportunity.”

“ One may not come, then it must be made ; otherwise knowledge would be wasted.”

“ Knowledge can never be wasted ; a man can always feel it is within him.”

“ A pleasurable feeling, I grant you, but what will it benefit him or any one else unless it comes out of him ? Knowledge misapplied is wicked- ”

ness, knowledge well applied, power ; but what is knowledge unapplied, but waste ? It seems to me so like the light ‘ hid under a bushel.’ Now, for instance, I can draw ; but if I content myself with the possession of the talent and do not produce it on paper, I have no pictures, and what do I benefit by the capability ? ”

“ But mental knowledge is unlike a mere mechanical talent, it shows in every act of life.”

“ Then, I think, it is not unapplied.”

“ But the sphere of action in a curate’s life is very circumscribed.”

“ Unless he goes beyond mere parochial duties, and strikes out something for himself.”

“ How can he, for instance, as I am placed ; with a rector who is too jealous of his authority to permit the catechising of a class except under his directions ? ”

“ The world would never have been the wiser for the depths of learning which lay in the authors’ minds, had they not written these,” she laid her slight white hand upon an old parchment covered folio before him.

“ To write a book, you mean ? You little know the obstacles.”

“ I know that in every walk of life there are

obstacles to those who would ascend—those who would conquer must overcome them, those who will not face them must be left behind; for many will, and some will succeed."

Eva had been standing all this time. It was too much for her, she became faint and leaned on the table for support. Charles started up.

"What a brute I have been to let you stand there and I sitting! I was so interested in what you said I forgot everything else. Do take my arm back to your sofa: I shall think more of this conversation. Lie down—put up your feet: you look so ill."

"I am better now, thank you," she said, with a faint smile; "indeed I am getting so well I am thinking of relieving Mrs. Stanhope of the troublesome charge she has had, and going home."

"You are not strong enough to travel yet."

"In a day or so I shall be."

"No, no. My holiday ends on Saturday: I mean to ask to have it prolonged one week. I may safely do so, for in our agreement I stand on the Cr. side with regard to work; if I thought it would injure you to travel then, I would ask for still longer. My mother is so much out, I do not

think you could get on well with no one else in the house."

"Longer than Saturday week; oh dear, no, I think I could travel very well next Saturday."

"We will not try you. If you continue to gain strength, I thought of running down to Glenmore with you on the Friday after, asking a night's lodging, and going on to my curacy next day. Would that arrangement please you?"

"Very much in every way, except that it distresses me to give you the trouble of taking such a round."

"That trouble will be a pleasure. I would not listen to your travelling alone."

"I have a great deal to thank you for, Mr. Stanhope."

"Don't talk about it now, please." He went back to his books.

On the day he had arranged Charles Stanhope took Eva home, attending on her through the journey with grave, considerate kindness. Eva had invited his mother to accompany them, but that lady wisely declined.

"No, my dear, not now—another time with pleasure. In the summer when we are choked with dust, and the air here is hot and vaporous,

then I will run down and visit you—since you are so kind to ask me, and taste your pure country air."

As Eva drove up the long approach to Glenmore her eye marked sorrowfully the still increasing untidiness of all around—not one broken rail was mended, not a clump of weeds removed, not a rut filled up. If a tree were fallen, all the rubbish of chips and branches remained to rot upon the spot, never cleared away for either firing or order. Everything bespoke the neglect or incapacity of the owner.

One remnant of joy was still left to Eva's desolate heart: she was to meet her mother; that one friend whose love had never failed her, between whose heart and hers there had never been a check, and to whose sympathy she looked forward with still one ray of hope.

Mrs. Desmond was disappointed in Charles Stanhope. She thought him so odd looking, and extremely unpolished; but as he had been kind to Eva in her necessity, she received him very cordially, and pressed him to renew his visit whenever he should have an opportunity. Randal laughed at him for "a swaddling hound!" but added "the devil wouldn't be bad looking if he didn't make

himself so with that outlandish hair and the clothes he has on him."

Mr. Desmond thought he was "no great shakes;" he could see that plainly: very little attention had been paid to his education, or if there had, he had not profited by it. The fact was, Mr. Desmond had proceeded to enlighten him on some portion of the Peninsula campaign, a favourite reminiscence with him, and Charles, who had read upon the subject for an examination in modern history, and was not aware that Mr. Desmond's listeners were not expected to use any of their senses except their hearing, told him the generals he spoke of were not at the battles he mentioned. Mr. Desmond insisted that they were: he saw them. Charles could tell where they were to a day: one left behind with a reserve, another in advance with head quarters, a third on one side with skirmishers: he brought down proof upon proof, and seemed to have it all at his finger ends, till poor Mr. Desmond became quite bewildered, and did not know where to take up the thread of his discourse, which he certainly often had by the wrong end. He thought it was very presumptuous in "a chap like that setting up to argue on a subject of which he could know nothing, with a man

who had been in the whole affair, and had his eyesight for what he advanced."

"May be you forget, Randal dear," said his wife, mildly: "it is a long time ago."

"No, I do not forget. I am as sure of it as that I am sitting here. But you think, I believe, that I have not the use of my senses, and imagine that any brat who comes here must know better. I was coming down a lane with my men, when Picton came up. 'Where is the officer of the detachment?' says he. I stepped out—"

So did Mrs. Desmond; she took up her key-basket, and muttering something about having forgotten, what she did not explain, slipped out of the room. She had heard that story so often she half believed it herself, but then she did not know the materials it was compiled from; which were, that in quite another place from that assigned to the scene, a Commissary-General had ridden up and made the inquiry, whereupon Randal's captain advanced to converse with him, and on his return, said to his subs, who were engaged over a stew furnished from a neighbouring hen roost, "It was well for you that was not old Picton, or the provost-marshall would have you both by this."

CHAPTER XX.

VISITORS AT GLENMORE.

IT was not until she had been a few days at home that the whole weight of her misery seemed to unfold itself to Eva. Hitherto there had been excitement about her, a necessity for action or for keeping up before strangers: the very circumstance of being with strangers had been of use to her; while with them we cannot wholly abandon ourselves to our own thoughts, and when those thoughts are for sorrow, it is well for us we cannot. But now that all restraint was removed, all necessity of exertion over, nothing to relieve the monotony of life, nothing to fill up the blank within, Eva's spirit gave way, and seemed to die within her. Hers was not a happy home: it was lonely and uncomfortable; her father cross and wayward, requiring constant management, and management of an irksome description, as it entailed on those who undertook it the inflictions of his choleric temper. His son Randal, idleness

had spoiled. It had driven him to seek for excitement among a lower caste than himself; or at least than, with the advantages he had had, he ought to be. He thought of nothing but amusing himself where and how he might. He was rude and inconsiderate at home, and added nothing to the common weal; the house was pleasanter when he was out of it than in it.

Many a sorrowful glance Eva cast back to the time when she made one of the family group at Oakstone. To her Aunt Herbert she had never written since the discovery of her treachery. That lady had, at first, tried to appear unconscious that any difference could exist between them, and had written letter after letter in apparent ignorance; but when to each no reply was vouchsafed, she could no longer affect ignorance, so she determined to throw off the mask, and wrote to vindicate her conduct, accusing Eva of being ungrateful. This letter shared the same fate as its brethren: it was not replied to, and she was therefore obliged to retire from the contest. But brave it how she would, there were times when Mrs. Herbert could not but feel that she had injured her niece, even if she ignored the wound to Eva's heart. She knew that she had embittered

her visit to Oakstone with sorrow and mortification. She could not blind herself to the cause of Eva's long illness in Dublin; and that Eva laid all at her door, she could not but gather from her utter rejection of all communication with her. She felt very angry: angry with Eva for setting up this love, as she called it; angry with the Cliftons for not managing matters better when they broke it off; angry with the Desmonds for resenting her share in it; angry with everybody but the one who made the mischief—her own dear self.

“That Aunt Herbert could prefer Clara Neville's happiness to mine!” said Eva, with bitterness, to her mother. “Uncle Herbert, I suppose, one should expect would; she is his niece, his ward; he likes managing people's affairs: that is, the affairs of the rich. It is an object to him to get her settled well, and he thinks Ernest would not be unkind to her; but Aunt Herbert!—to look at **Clara**, and to think she sacrificed me for her.”

“It was not Clara your aunt was thinking of,” said Mrs. Desmond, “it was of herself: the aggrandisement of her own family. Ernest will be the head of it, and Clara's large possessions (if she gets them all) will place him high in the

county. He can live in great splendour in that fine place, and Mrs. Herbert is his aunt."

"She is a great deal more careful of her nephews than of her nieces," said Eva, bitterly.

"The nephews live near her, the nieces far away. I dare say she little cares who Randal marries, because he will not come in contact with her: she would not care about Edward Phillips if he were not, as your uncle says, 'under their noses.'"

Months rolled sadly on: it was long before Eva could bring herself to go back to her usual occupations; slowly and by degrees she did. She had much to worry and vex her, but she made no complaint; her pale face was grave but very calm, and each morning bore no trace of the many tears that had watered her pillow; her silvery laugh no longer rang through the house; the bright light of fun and merriment had left her eye; her spirit seemed crushed beyond rebound—broken.

About this time Randal married; married as well as he could expect, living the idle life he did. His wife had 1,500*l.* Glenmore was settled on him at his marriage; no power or influence that the ladies could exert would induce old Mr. Desmond to declare openly how he was arranging

the business. They saw him writing letters and receiving papers, the purport of which he would not explain; and they dreaded every time he went to his desk lest some irremediable evil should be the result: he was so confident of his own abilities, he would allow no one to, what he called, dictate to him. The result was the settlement of Glenmore upon Randal; no power reserved of charging it with any sum for the girls. When Mr. Desmond discovered his error, he sent for a form empowering him to place a charge upon the property thus settled, which form he wanted Randal to sign; but Randal declined. Then he raged and stormed. What did that avail? It gave him no power of charging the property; no power of making any provision for Eva beyond the 500*l.* not yet made away with. Then Mrs. Desmond spoke out:

“ Oh, Randal, Randal, will you never take warning, never distrust your own erring judgment? You see how every act of your life is for evil to your family, and yet you run as headlong into business as if you were capable of managing it unassisted. After squandering by your own foolishness so much of your daughters’ money, you have left yourself unable to leave your beautiful, and now, alas, delicate Eva, the

means of subsistence. It will be a most bitter reflection to you on your death-bed that you have robbed your child of bread by your own obstinate folly."

Mrs. Desmond was very much excited, and her husband was cowed for once, but nothing altered circumstances.

Randal would fain have brought his wife to live at Glenmore; but that, both Eva and her mother strenuously opposed. They could look before them if Mr. Desmond could not, and they saw incalculable ills would arise from such an arrangement. On this subject they carried their point while Mr. Desmond was still under the cloud of his late offence, and the young couple took a cottage near, with some land which they farmed.

Summer time had now far advanced. Eva received a letter from Mrs. Stanhope, saying the air of Dublin had become very suffocating; taking this for a hint that she wished to change it, Eva wrote inviting her to Glenmore. She came so quickly, it led one to suspect she must have already packed up and been waiting the reply to her letter. The Desmonds were glad to see her, and return the hospitality Eva had received from her.

The morning after her arrival she burst into Eva's room.

Eva slept in the large best bed-room which had never been finished: there was no grate or chimney piece, and the furniture was of the scantiest and roughest kind. In one corner, was Eva's bed, a mere pallet; in another, the one that had been Myra's, now piled with spare clothes of Eva's. On a plain deal table in one window was a drawing board, with a half-finished drawing stretched upon it, two or three different sized blocks, some boxes of colours, brushes, gall-pots, sponges, and all the requisites of the art; but dirty and untidy as such things get by constant use. In an old bandbox without a lid on the floor were pieces and parings of leather, rags soiled with varnish moulds and wires, and rejected leaves and flowers, the spare *debris* from the manufacture of the beautiful leather frames in the drawing-room. In various small boxes about were similar chips of different descriptions; remains of fashionable employments, pursued for the time they were the rage and abandoned when supplanted. On a box at the head of Eva's bed were piled in disorder many books of various kinds, and a box of night-lights beside them told that Eva's sleep was

sometimes truant. All these things gave the room a very untidy appearance ; but it was large and airy. Mrs. Stanhope coveted it the moment she entered.

“ Eva, my dear, is it here you sleep ? What a fine airy room. Do you know I found my room very oppressive last night ; when I awoke this morning I was quite in a bath.”

“ Were the shutters closed ? ”

“ Ah, no, my dear ; I opened them last night when I went up to bed : I could not sleep shut up in that way—most unhealthy.”

“ That was the reason,” replied Eva : “ the morning sun is strong on that room, but if the shutters are kept closed until getting up time, it is a cool room.”

“ Cool ! my dear ; I thought it must be over the kitchen fire.”

“ No ; it is over the back drawing-room, which never has a fire in it. The kitchen is on the other side of the house and a story lower.”

“ This is a fine airy room,” said Mrs. Stanhope, looking about, “ you do well to sleep in it. Do you know I think I will ask a great favour from you, just to let me come and sleep in that little bed yonder ; I could pull it out of the corner—

unwholesome sleeping so near walls: you should have air all round your bed. What do you say, my dear?"

" You will be very welcome, Mrs. Stanhope; but this room is so untidy: I will give it up to you entirely, and go into yours. I will try to settle this. The reason I sleep in it is because it is not finished, and does not answer for a spare room. But if you prefer it, I will move into yours to-day."

" No, my dear, don't do that. I will keep my own room, and just come here to sleep."

" I do not think it any trouble to move, Mrs. Stanhope. I have not forgotten that you put me into your own bed and gave up your room to me."

" Ah, my dear, that was different, you were sick. No, love, I would rather not: I will just keep that room as a dressing room—I would rather, indeed, and will sleep here."

Eva would rather she did not: would rather have been alone; but she let her settle it as she wished.

" Mrs. Stanhope," said Mrs. Desmond, one morning at breakfast, " would not your son like to get a week's holiday and come over to meet you here? We should be very glad to see him."

Mr. Desmond looked as if all the company were

not to be included in the last sentence, but as he said nothing the ladies did not notice him.

“Indeed, thank you, dear Mrs. Desmond; I am sure it would do him good, a little rest and change of air, poor fellow! I will write him your kind invitation this very day.”

“Here is a little note, a direct invitation; please enclose it in your letter,” said Mrs. Desmond, when she saw Mrs. Stanhope’s production being folded. She thought, from what she had seen of her, that perhaps Charles might not like to act on his mother’s invitation.

“Ah, well, that is kind! Thank you, I will.”

It had the desired effect. Charles came for a clergyman’s week: he arrived on Monday evening, and was to leave on Saturday morning. He seemed disappointed to find Eva still looking so pale.

“I had hoped,” said he, “to find you had regained your colour: my mother told me you had such a beautiful one formerly.”

“I have never had any since my illness,” she answered, with a sigh.

“It will come as you gain strength. You are not so strong as you were before, are you?”

“No.”

Eva felt she never should be again.

One day they were taking a walk together, Charles said—

“Do you know, Miss Desmond, I have been thinking a great deal of what you said to me that day you were looking over my books in Dublin : doing more than think ; I have been trying to act on it.”

“On what?”

“On what you said to me about applying my knowledge to some use.”

“I am glad of that,” said Eva, smiling, “for I am sure you must succeed. What have you been doing? Writing?”

“That was what you seemed to point out.”

“Forgive me, I did not mean to point out anything ; I was not so presumptuous : nor, indeed, did I know in what line your talents lay. It did not strike me to be in action ; but you told me you had no opportunity.”

“Then what was left to do but to write?”

“What have you been writing?”

“Nothing, as yet, to be of any use. I have but been trying to make a style ; or rather to overcome defects in style. I find it harder than you

would think, and often distrust my own judgment."

"Would not comparing your style with that of model authors assist your judgment?" said Eva.

"Certainly; but even then I doubt if I decide impartially. I mean to ask you to take the trouble of reading some of the fragments I have been writing, and to give me your candid opinion."

"Me! oh, Mr. Stanhope, my opinion would not be worth having: you should get some learned man like yourself to criticise them."

"At some future time, perhaps; meanwhile, you will indulge my wish to have your opinion, will you not?"

"If I find I can form any I will give it sincerely. What subject do you select?"

"For these fugitive things, any; to write on permanently, I find it hard to decide. Metaphysics I have studied most deeply."

"Would not divinity be a subject more likely to advance you in your profession?" said Eva, timidly.

He looked thoughtful — "Perhaps, yes; I have of course studied it a good deal, still not so profoundly as I have the sciences?"

“ But could you not yet? A mind so deeply stored as yours could, I should think, adapt its powers to any congenial study. I am so ignorant of such matters I scarcely like to speak of them; but it seems to me that divinity is the proper subject for a clergyman to devote his mind to.”

“ I wish I had always done so.”

“ Would not the previous study of metaphysics be of use in following that of theology?”

“ Doubtless, in grappling with any branch of knowledge where the reasoning powers are brought into action. But of what I have done” (he pulled some papers out of his pocket) “ will you read a few of these and give me your opinion of the writing?”

“ May I take them away with me? I can so much better think of what I read when I am alone. Do not give me abstruse subjects. I have more chance of judging correctly, even of the language, of what I understand; and do you know,” she said, looking up with a half bashful smile, “ I do not know even what metaphysics are. I can, of course, attach a kind of general meaning to the word, but that is all.”

“ There are some papers on ethics,” he said, turning them over; “ you will understand them at

once, and some on the commonest philosophy. Do not let my mother see them, or I shall have it all over Dublin that I am writing the cleverest book ever known."

Eva took the papers, and that night, when she had satisfactorily ascertained that Mrs. Stanhope slept, struck a light and perused them. On returning them to the writer next day, she said—

"Of the philosophy contained in these, Mr. Stanhope, I cannot pretend to give an opinion; it may be just or false, undeniable or open to refutation, for aught I know."

"I think I am pretty sure of the philosophy, though philosophy is often but what philosophers make it; they dress a favorite idea in the garb of reason and call it philosophy. It is of the writing and of the style I would ask your opinion —your *candid* opinion, Miss Desmond."

"I am almost afraid to give it: I may be wrong, but I fancied that in some places there was an awkwardness of expression. I do not mean that the language was not lucid, for I understood it: I hardly know how to explain, but it seemed to me, that if happier expressions had been chosen, not only the language but the meaning conveyed

would have been more forcible, and the sentences read better. I am afraid I do not make it clear."

"I understand you, Miss Desmond; it is the very fault I find in myself: the great difficulty I have to overcome. When I sit down at my desk the right expressions will not come to convey the idea I want to express in the best manner: common expressions, of course, I can command; but I know that better exist, though I cannot find them, and I am obliged to write down what will come or leave the idea unexpressed. You see I have been so long used to read books merely for their ideas, not their language, and I now reap the disadvantage of it."

"Will not that be a defect likely to give way to a little practice?" asked Eva, gently.

"Practice has already done much for me, but until it does more, there is no use my thinking of writing for publication."

"Perhaps not; I do not know. But I would persevere in practice, were I you. It must facilitate expression: how much it does in speaking. I would never lose an idea for the want of words to express it gracefully; would just jot it down in whatever came. It may be of great use to you hereafter, when you shall have mastered your

present difficulty, and can work it up in forcible and luminous language, and when, perhaps, the idea itself could not be recalled. Some ideas come like visions, and, once lost, never revisit the brain."

Charles gazed at her. She looked so softly feminine while she counselled so gravely. There was no animation in her gentle countenance; it was very cold, but very sweet and mild.

Charles's week passed away without the subject of literature being renewed. He read a great deal, but not so much as he had done in Dublin. At Glenmore there was a copy of Magee on the Atonement, which had been knocked down at a sale to Mr. Desmond's bid; he having taken a fancy to its Russian leather binding, and comprehending about as much of its contents as the binding itself. This book was a treasure to Charles Stanhope: he might be seen with a volume under his arm making off into the groves, every time that he knew Eva was not likely to come out.

Saturday came too quickly. Mrs. Stanhope exerted a little influence privately to induce her son to apply for another week's leave of absence, and remain in such good quarters; but Charles was not very amenable to his mother's private

admonitions, and he positively refused to comply. Before his departure, Mrs. Desmond gave him a kind assurance that if he at any time happened to pass within distance of Glenmore she should be happy to see him; an offer of which he said, he hoped at some future time to avail himself.

Mrs. Stanhope did not appear to share her son's spirit of moderation: she paid a long visit at Glenmore; so long they began to wonder if she ever meant to go, in perfect ignorance, as they were, that she had let her house for three months before she left Dublin. Accustomed for many years to a town life she was charmed to enjoy for awhile the variety of the country. She delighted in the long rapid drives, was entranced with the clear fresh air off mountain and water, and luxuriated in the fruit. Indeed so palatable did she find the latter, and to such a pitch did she carry her appreciation of it, that she not unfrequently had to resort to Eva for hot negus, to allay the inward irritation caused by over indulgence.

Eva tried to pay back in kindness and attention to her the debt she had contracted during her illness; though had she formed a proper estimate of the just distribution of dues,

considerably the larger portion would have been transferred to Charles. Mrs. Desmond, who perhaps better appreciated their relative claims, bore with her volatile visitor, of whom she was heartily tired, in a manner which would have been praiseworthy had it been more exertion; but Mrs. Desmond was so inured to forbearance it had become second nature to her.

The three months ended, Mrs. Stanhope, who wanted to return to take up her house from the tenant, quoted an engagement with a mythic individual of whom she delighted to make mention, and always styled "my man of business," as a plea for tearing herself from the hospitable mansion where she had spent so enjoyable a visit.

"I wonder," said Mrs. Desmond to Eva, "does she think it necessary to make an apology for going away? I should have thought the apology ought to be for having stayed."

CHAPTER XXI.

OVERTURES REJECTED.

EVa had never received a letter from Ernest, since her return to Ireland. Long and eagerly had she watched for one; but, at length, hope died away and her heavy eyelid was no longer raised when the post-bag entered. Often had her heart hungered for some intelligence of him. What was he doing? What were his thoughts? Did he miss her? Was he grieved for the sorrow he had brought on her? Did he know of her illness and reproach himself as its cause? No feeling can be more drearily oppressive than that of total ignorance of everything connected with a being whom our heart has so amalgamated with our own existence, that to lose it seems like wrenching from us a part of ourselves. The heart is punished for its idolatry: take from it the idol and what is left to it? We cannot fill up the blank, cannot ignore the want: the void so aches

that even painful intelligence would be preferable to none. This sorrow was Eva's lot. She never heard anything of Ernest. Miss Boare, indeed, sometimes mentioned that she had seen him, but she never had anything more to communicate. Agnes never named or alluded to him, so that, except for remembrance, he was dead to Eva.

Once, months after her return to Glenmore, a letter directed in his well-known hand fell upon the table as the post-bag was being emptied. Eva took it up and went with it to her room. Before she opened it she knelt down and prayed: for what, she did not know; still she prayed. Sorrow had become so identified with him in her mind that she dreaded even the opening of his letter. It was a very common-place letter; the confidential tone had entirely disappeared. It was written for the purpose of trying to effect a reconciliation between her and the Herberts, whose sin against her Ernest tried to place in a more venial light than she regarded it; and the writer's past intercourse with her was only alluded to in so far as was demanded by the letter's purport. Hot tears of wounded pride gushed to Eva's eyes as she read; but they were wiped away and the more subdued expression of wounded feeling suc-

ceeded. She put the letter aside, and locking the drawer that contained it, turned sadly away. She did not answer that letter for some days; when she did, it was in complete rejection of his mediation. She told him that as long as he had only dictated terms for himself she had bowed in silence to his decision, but that when he took the part of others against her, she felt no longer bound to submit. She utterly repudiated all reconciliation with the Herberts: “between them and her there was a gulf fixed.”

Unsatisfactory letters came to Glenmore from Barbadoes. The Hassards appeared to be living imprudently: Myra seemed to have caught the contagion of her husband’s extravagance. They had now three children. The insurance on his life had been dropped, in consequence of the increased rate of premium demanded by the Company on a residence in the West Indies; and instead of living most economically, and putting by some of the pay as a provision for future wants, they appeared to be not only living up to, but forestalling, their income. Mrs. Desmond was frightened and remonstrated; Mr. Desmond stormed and wrote intemperate letters, which, by exasperating the Hassards, counteracted any

good which his wife's more gentle and reasonable representations might otherwise have effected. Eva, with whom the Hassards had never been very cordial since her refusal to allow the security, knew perfectly well that her interference would be of no service, and did not intrude it; but she foresaw that if any misfortune happened to them, it was to Glenmore they must look, for amongst Mr. Hassard's family there was not a spare penny piece to reckon on.

Eva did not resign herself supinely to regret and sorrow; she tried to struggle against the languor which overwhelmed her, sought occupation, and forced herself to continue employment that was often irksome to her. But she found it impossible entirely to occupy her mind to the exclusion of painful recollections. Employ her hands how she would her thoughts were dwelling upon Ernest, recurring sadly and regretfully to the past, picturing to herself with poignant anguish the future, in which each was to have no part with the other. Often would fancy paint that future, when he and his wife should occupy those halls with whose every nook she was so familiar; when another than she should watch from the

bay window for his appearance between the poplar trees, or stroll with him along the terrace watching their children at play—she distant and forgotten ; should soothe his ruffled feelings as she had once done, and be to him all she had once hoped to be. The unhappy find a kind of morbid pleasure in conjuring up and dwelling upon scenes of pain : it is making too little of their burden of affliction not to indulge it, and they lacerate their sore hearts when they might leave them to heal. But though it must be owned that Eva sometimes willingly gave her grief full scope, she more often yielded involuntarily because she could not help it.

It was after Charles Stanhope's visit to Glenmore that she conceived the idea of trying to divert her thoughts into another channel by writing. Fiction was what she chose ; in the first place, because it was the only kind of writing she believed herself capable of accomplishing ; and, secondly, because being of an imaginative turn of mind, she considered that by exercising her imagination, she could more easily shake off the apathy that oppressed her, divest herself of other thoughts, and by throwing herself into an imaginary world, for the time escape from the sorrows and annoyances of the

real one. Her conception was quickly acted on, and she had every reason to bless it. Though far from curing, it did much towards alleviating the disease she struggled with. She took an interest in weaving the tale and working out the characters that she could not have taken in anything real around her, and they often supplied her with pleasurable thoughts to the expulsion of painful ones. To no one did she reveal her occupation: not even to her mother. A kind of false shame, a distrust of her literary ability, withheld her, and her labour was carried on in secret; stealthily pursued at night when she was supposed to be asleep, often continued out-of-doors when it was imagined she was taking exercise.

Eva was so employed on a mild, damp day, when spring was usurping the throne of winter. She had strolled, with her blotting book under her shawl, through a thick grove not far from the house. Believing herself to be safe from intrusion, she seated herself on the trunk of a fallen tree, and drawing forth her manuscript was soon unconscious of every thing except the subject she was intent on. Suddenly raising her eyes and gazing on vacancy, as one does in searching for some expressive term, or to

concentrate thought on some undeveloped idea, she became aware that a man was approaching from the opposite extremity of the grove to that from which she had come (the grove occupying two sides of a square, and forming an angle, in which she was seated). Taking it to be her brother Randal, whose cottage lay in that direction, she hurriedly concealed her papers, and began turning over some old letters she happened to have in her pocket. But as the figure approached she saw it was not Randal, though who it could be who was traversing that unusual path she was at a loss to conjecture ; she was puzzling herself to find out, when the depending branch of a tree knocked off his hat, and by the long, lank, raven hair revealed, she recognised Charles Stanhope. With a hasty glance to assure herself that no tell-tale corner of the manuscript was discernible, she rose to meet him. He gave a quick uneasy look at the letters in her hand. The first greeting over, he said—

“ You are busy, Miss Desmond ; I am afraid I have disturbed you.”

“ No, indeed ; I am very happy to see you. I was but searching through these old notes to see

if they may be burnt. Some of them are from your mother."

Charles looked relieved. He told Eva he was on his way to Dublin, and as Mrs. Desmond had kindly given him permission to call if in the neighbourhood, he had made his road lie by Glenmore. Having got off the coach on the Belturbet road, he had left his carpet-bag at the herdsman's, and was making his way by the shortest route to the house. Eva welcomed him kindly, and they walked up together, and in the flower-garden joined Mrs. Desmond, who received the unexpected guest with a warmth of cordiality she did not often display, her manner being usually very passive.

Charles stayed two days, the greater part of which was spent by him and Eva either over books and papers, or else strolling together through the fields. Eva's own recent occupations gave her more interest in his, and his grave sensible conversation suited the chastened tone of her altered temperament.

His visit was followed by one from George Leslie, who, having come into the country after a lengthened absence, had called two or three times without having been able to see Eva. This day he went round the house, looking in through the

windows, determined, if Eva were not visible, to go away and come some other part of the day. She was alone in the drawing-room ; her back was towards him, as she sat at the table employed in cutting some strips of silver paper to ornament the grate ; fire having been discontinued in the room (though it could badly be spared as yet) in consequence of Mr. Desmond's grumblings at the consumption of fuel : he always growled at the drawing-room fire, because it seemed to belong more especially to the ladies, he seldom entering the room.

Leslie, delighted at getting an opportunity of seeing Eva alone, quickly entered the house.

“She shan’t bolt this time,” he thought, as he made unceremoniously for the drawing-room door ; but there was something about Eva that always awed him. After his hand was on the handle he paused ; he could not thus abruptly intrude upon her privacy : he knocked.

“Come in,” said a voice, whose unwonted languor he could detect even in those two words. Eva turned her face towards the door as it opened, Leslie started, and stopped short at the sight. He had taken particular pains with his appearance that morning ; had put more than usual dye upon

his hair and more than usual curl in his whiskers, and had dressed himself in what he considered a very "slap-up" morning costume: he entered the room with a very self-satisfied, self-confident air. (Eva, who had not seen him for nearly two years, thought that he looked more vulgar and more filled with self-conceit than ever.) But there was something very natural in the dead halt he came to on seeing her altered countenance, and in the surprise and concern that were depicted in his own.

"Why, Eva! what's amiss?" he exclaimed, too familiarly and abruptly for good breeding.

"I did not know that anything was," she said, coldly withdrawing the hand she was in the act of extending to him.

"Anything! Why, what the deuce has changed you so?"

Eva coloured. "Time, I suppose," she answered, proudly.

"Time! nonsense! Have you been ill, or has anything been fretting you. Has the old boy been at any of his wise pranks lately?"

"I do not know what you mean."

"Don't tell lies, Eva; you do, well. Tell me is it anything at all that I can help you

in? You know I would work for you willingly."

"Thank you; I will not give you the trouble. I do not want anything."

"Come, Eva, we are old friends; tell me what is the matter." He approached and took her hand: he was drawing her nearer to him than she liked; she struggled to free her hand, but he continued to hold it firmly though he refrained from drawing her towards him. He was looking with real concern in her face. Anxious to end a scrutiny she found to be distressing, Eva said—

"I suppose you see me altered; I was very ill last year and the traces have never disappeared."

"There are traces of more than last year's illness in your altered face, Eva," said the lawyer, tenderly, but with a degree of intimate familiarity that Eva found insupportable. She turned away her head, and tried to withdraw her hand. Her lover held it still. "You are altered, Eva, but I am not. I make you the same offer I did three years ago. Will you be my wife? Don't turn away your face. I love you sincerely. I am well to do in the world, and you have little or nothing, Consider how you would be off if

your father died. I will be kind and indulgent, and will allow the little nonsenses you women take pleasure in. Will you have me? Look up in my face and say 'Yes,' and I will do all I can to bring back the colour and the smiles into yours."

Eva looked up in his face, but she did not say "Yes :" she said—

"No."

"Don't be foolish, Eva: you are rejecting a good offer. Come here, and listen to reason."

He sat down and tried to draw her on his knee. She sprang back as far as his hold would allow her.

"What nonsense, Eva! Love apart, we are old friends enough for it. Don't look so angry; though, faith, I won't find fault with anything that puts some colour into your face: I thought you had turned into a statue when first I saw you."

Eva could stand it no longer; she burst into tears.

"Well, come, don't do that. There, I won't hold you; you shall go if you like, only don't cry: I did not mean to vex you; don't sob so, Eva. This is the last time I shall ever

ask you. Tell me, are you determined to refuse me?"

"I am," replied Eva, and breaking from him she hastily left the room.

A month after George Leslie was married to a girl he had known only three weeks.

Eva's next proposal was from Edward Clifton. On hearing of the termination of her acquaintance with his brother Ernest, which intelligence did not reach him for nearly a year after its occurrence, he wrote from Corfu a long and passionate letter, telling Eva that nothing had driven him from her side but her unmistakable preference for Ernest; but now that his brother was no longer a barrier, he would urge his prior claim to her love and offer himself to her as a husband; and if she would accept him, he declared most strenuously, that neither friends nor obstacles should weigh with *him* one feather's weight in the balance against the happiness of possessing her.

To this letter Eva returned a kind but firm refusal.

"Dear Eva, you must not go on in this way, wasting your youth in mourning over a phantom," said Mrs. Desmond, as she sat rubbing with

her thumb a highly glazed card on which was engraved—

Mr. and Mrs. George Leslie,

3, Fitz-William Square, East.

“ I dare say you find it hard to bring your mind to it, and I have foreborne to urge it until you have had time to recover a little ; but consider the future. In a year or two this feeling of regret for a particular individual will die away ; and picture yourself—suppose, we say in twenty years to come—on one side, with a home and husband, and children growing up around you, loved, and respected, and cared for ; or, on the other side, in a miserable lodging, a desolate old maid, with no one to cheer and love you, and with scarcely the means of keeping soul and body together—just reflect on the two pictures.”

“ What are you aiming at, mother ? You would not wish me force myself into Oakstone : and George Leslie is married.”

“Yes. You had a personal dislike to him; but there are others.”

“I do not know who they are.”

“What would you say to Charles Stanhope?”

Eva laughed involuntarily: she was cheated into it.

“Charles Stanhope! Only fancy!”

“Would you fancy him?”

“I never thought about it, nor he either.”

“I am not so sure of that; I think he likes you. You must have seen a good deal of him in Dublin; did you think you could like him?”

“I never thought about it; it never once entered my head.”

“Do you dislike him?”

“No; he is too good and too clever to be disliked. I never thought about it in any way.”

“Suppose you were to think about it, and try to bring your mind round: if you do not, and he comes some of these days to offer himself, you will be refusing him without a moment’s deliberation. He is clever and sensible, well-principled, and I think kind-hearted.”

“Such an extraordinary looking being.”

“ He is well-looking. You would soon metamorphose his appearance. What a change you often made in Randal’s.”

“ Randal wished to be settled right, only he did not know how to do it and thought I did. Mr. Stanhope, I believe, did not care if he had no body at all, so that he was left his mind.”

“ Then he will be content to leave the care of the former to you. It is very well for him to have the mind. It seems to me he would suit you.”

Eva shook her head sadly.

“ Think over it,” said her mother, “ and make no answer now. It is to be expected that it will take a little time for reason to work against feeling; but make the first step, and think of it.”

CHAPTER XXII.

OLD TIES AND NEW.

EVA received a letter from Agnes Clifton. The correspondence between the two girls had gradually slackened, until, at length, a letter became a rare thing: the fault lay on Eva's side. She wrote the more seldom, and her letters were constrained and short. The fact that one subject which occupied the heart of one and the mind of the other was never named between them was, in itself, sufficient to annihilate all frank confidence or cordial interchange of ideas.

This was a long letter. Eva wondered at the commencement; it was written kindly and delicately, with much affectionate sympathy and evident tenderness towards her feelings, as if preparing her for some communication which would afflict them. The first line which followed this preparatory introduction revealed what that communication was to be. It contained the name

of Clara Neville. Eva read no more. Crushing the letter in her hand, she rushed up to her room and threw herself on her face on the bed, her hands clenched tightly above her head. Her mother, who had followed her, gently turned her off her face and began bathing her forehead (in which the veins were swollen like whipcord) with *eau de Cologne* and water, speaking low and soothingly all the time. The wretched girl made no reply, but a loud, harsh, fearful laugh that made her mother start with terror. Again and again she repeated it as if in wild mockery of her own agony. There is something very dreadful in an hysterical laugh, when the hysterics have been produced by mental suffering: something very appalling in its shrill, shrieking, mocking irony.

Eva's laugh had always been very silvery and gladsome, and the contrast from those joyous outbreaks of merriment to this delirious convulsion of agony was the more shocking. This last deathblow to her love had been too much for her: desertion has not reached its culminating point until jealousy is added. Love with Eva had been no child's play, no transient fancy; it had been a deep, absorbing feeling. That strong passion of our nature, in her young, warm, ardent heart, with

its deep tides of good and generous feelings, its eddies of hopes and fears, its currents of tumult and anxiety—all to end in the whirlpool of disappointment and desolation! It was too much.

After many convulsive sobs, Eva, at length, began to weep passionately, to her mother's great relief, for she believed that nothing but copious tear-shedding could relieve that surcharged heart. For two hours she cried with a violence that knew no abatement. But human nature could not sustain such racking exertion for a continuance. From sheer exhaustion she was obliged to be still, and in a little while dropped asleep. Her mother sat beside her, and as she watched the swollen eyelids and hollow tear-stained cheek of the once brilliant girl, she experienced towards those who had wrought such ruin, a bitterness of feeling which no early recollections or associations of bygone childhood could counterbalance.

Eva never answered that letter. When, long after, she wrote to Agnes, she made no allusion to its contents; but for many a day her appearance bore their impress. There was a cheerless gravity in her manner, a hopelessness in her look, a languor and despondency in her every movement that told how deeply the iron had entered. Even

the occupation of the tale was abandoned from inability to rouse her prostrated faculties. How great the struggle had been, how much influence had been used, how long it was before Ernest succumbed, and how much the indifference of feeling resulting from the sapping of his affections towards herself, had been instrumental in effecting his acquiescence to the fate his relations coveted for him, Eva never knew; all she knew, all she felt, was, that Clara Neville, not she, was to be his wife.

The subject of his marriage was never named again by either herself or her mother. She was spared hearing of the preparations; she was in ignorance when it was to take place. Mrs. Desmond knew the progress of events from her sister, Mrs. Phillips; but she carefully concealed them from her unhappy daughter, who now never made an inquiry, or referred most distantly to anything connected with Wiltshire. The wedding was retarded by a melancholy circumstance which occurred about the time it was fixed for; the death of little Arlette. The child's health had for some time been declining without any visible cause; her father and Agnes went with her to London, and got the first advice; but pathology has not yet

fathomed the cause and antidote of that inexplicable decay which so often carries off children, particularly those of a sensitive and precocious organization, at an early age ; and the remedies suggested were of no avail. She suffered no pain, only weariness ; but she lost her strength and wasted away, and finally closed her eyes, and died, as if she were falling asleep, without a struggle or a moan. Agnes wrote to inform Eva of her death, and Eva asked her mother to answer the letter, and say that she was unwell.

Mrs. Desmond expected a visit from Charles Stanhope, whom she invited to take Glenmore on his return from Dublin, whither he had gone to attend the April meetings ; but he was obliged to return without delay, and wrote to postpone his visit : this Mrs. Desmond was not sorry for ; it would give Eva more time to recover. She concealed the letter, and avoided all allusion to the writer in her conversations with her daughter, whose sick heart, she feared, could not now be induced to entertain any matrimonial proposition. She trusted to sorrow's best medicine "Time."

Bad news came from Barbadoes ; yellow fever had visited the islands ; Mr. Hassard had been seized, and in four days was a corpse ; his wife and

her three children, and another coming, were left with the pension of a lieutenant's widow as their only support.

The inhabitants of Glenmore were plunged into the most profound grief. At first Myra and her affliction claimed their every thought; as that subsided, Eva and her mother had to endure the whole burden of Mr. Desmond's reproaches and invectives: to listen for the millionth time to the relation of his own wisdom and foresight, and the imprudence and foolishness of every one else. It was useless to represent to him that the circumstances which had made them approve the match had not existed, and that he had not had sufficient cleverness and prudence to discover their non-existence. They were always borne down with—

“ You were all so wise. I knew nothing. You’re satisfied now, I hope. A pretty kettle of fish you’ve made of it. If my advice had been taken she never should have had him. I wonder now which of us was right? I always hated the match. Good reason I have for hating it now. I shall have herself and her four children to support.”

To do him justice no idea but of supporting them ever entered his head. He never could have borne to see one of his family in want; but of

extracting every particle of honey from his assistance, he possessed the power in an eminent degree.

Myra, whose imprudence had left her without any funds, had to be supplied with money to bring her home: this was procured by a bill at the bank, a means of raising money not uncommon at Glenmore. Mrs. Desmond felt much anxiety on Eva's account; now that she had no spirit to seek amusement for herself, her life was very cheerless, her health was extremely delicate, her appetite very capricious. Her mother, who was aware that the large addition to their family would lessen the comforts and cripple the means of enjoyments which even they possessed, felt very anxious that Eva should be removed to another home; she also anticipated in a change of life and its increasing interests, a beneficial effect upon her darling's subdued and listless frame of mind. It was with great pleasure she received a note from Charles Stanhope announcing that he purposed paying his visit to Glenmore on the following week. She did not tell Eva of the note, and made no reference to matrimony: she was afraid Eva could not brook it; but she represented to her the influence which the influx of dependent people would have in making

Glenmore a less supportable residence, and then left her to think over the matter by herself. Minds are sometimes more amenable to a hint than to a direct suggestion; the one germinates thought in their own brain, the other but forces on them the thoughts of others.

But Charles Stanhope's visit passed without his ever alluding to the subject which Mrs. Desmond had believed to be the purport of it. He conversed a great deal with Eva, but always on indifferent subjects: he was often absent and inattentive; but he forbore any disputation with Mr. Desmond, who sometimes advanced strange doctrines. Believing it to be depreciating his intellect to acknowledge ignorance on any subject, Mr. Desmond would give his opinion confidently on whatever was discussed, supposing it involved the deepest scientific knowledge; sometimes he made a lucky hit, which was an anchor to rest on for many a day after: he never considered that when a man has been a few times discovered talking of what he does not understand, it vitiates all else he says, in the opinion of reasonable men, and that he gets no credit, even on a subject he is conversant with, unless some corroborative evidence is attainable. At first, Charles was used to look up with contradiction

in his face at Mr. Desmond's assertions; however, he soon discovered how the land lay, and steered clear of the shoals of discussion, by which means they got on much better together.

"How do you think Eva looking, Mr. Stanhope?" asked Mrs. Desmond of her visitor. She was sitting alone with him just before his departure, Eva having gone to look for a book he had asked her to lend him.

"I think her looking more than usually delicate," he answered. "As she says herself it may be the black dress that has the effect of making her appear so."

"Some people say Eva looks as well without a colour as with one: that pallor becomes her fragile style."

"I never saw her with a colour. She looks very beautiful without one," was the reply, as Eva entered with the book.

Nothing more passed, except leave-taking. Mrs. Desmond felt disappointed. Prejudices once over, she believed Charles Stanhope capable of making Eva as happy as circumstances would admit of her being. He was clever; that went a long way with Mrs. Desmond, who all her life had had to struggle against incapacity.

Intelligence arrived that the vessel which was conveying Myra Hassard and her children home had put in at Liverpool, and active preparations for their reception began to take place at Glenmore. Eva was moved into the room which Mrs. Stanhope had formerly found too hot; Myra and her two elder children were to occupy the large spare room which Eva had resigned, the nurse and youngest child the dressing-room off it.

Mr. Desmond went to Dublin to receive the travellers and settle about the conveyance of their luggage.

The morning of the day on which they were all expected to arrive at Glenmore, Charles Stanhope unexpectedly made his appearance there. When he found how matters stood, nothing would induce him to remain. Mrs. Desmond pressed him to stay, at least, until the following day, but he said he preferred returning: he would walk over to Bettystown and catch the mail car; Eva, he asked to bear him company a little of the way. As she was leaving the room to comply, she turned suddenly round, and saw her mother's eyes fixed, anxiously and with peculiar meaning in them, on her.

Charles and his companion strolled down the fields the shortest way to the road; he seemed

abstracted, she, as usual, very silent. When about midway between the house and the road, he pulled out his watch and looked at it.

“It is but an hour and a half’s walk to Bel-turbet, is it?”

“That, at least, I should say,” she replied.”

“I am a fast walker. No use starting so soon. Let us sit under this beautiful hawthorn for a while and enjoy the shade and the perfume.” He took off his coat and threw it on the ground, motioning to Eva to sit on it.

“Almost as chivalrous as Raleigh,” said she, seating herself, with that wan smile which always made her face appear more sweetly sad than before.

“Almost as aspiring,” replied the curate, throwing himself on the ground at her feet. “I have at least one advantage over him, my old coat has a fairer burden than his velvet cloak. How delicious is this pure scented country air! Even to breathe it makes one feel happy.”

“Do you not want a book to complete your happiness?” said Eva, smiling with the same smile.

“No; I could not read, now; but I want something to complete my happiness.” He looked up,

fixed his large, dark eyes for a moment on her face, coloured and dropped them again. It must have been his own feelings that raised his colour, nothing could be more coldly steady than Eva's gaze.

“ You are coming out in a new character,” she remarked ; “ you say you are aspiring ; has fame begun to be seductive ? ”

“ I would court her, but I want a ray to guide me to her portals. You do not know how dark the future sometimes looks.”

“ Is not Intellect a beacon ? ”

“ Even that often times dims and flickers under fatigue or uncertainty.”

“ There is always Hope.”

“ Hope is but a gilded name for Suspense.”

“ Even Suspense is better than Despair: the one is life, the other death, morally speaking.”

“ None of these can satisfy me: I want something more.”

“ What do you want ? ”

“ Love. You will smile and call this a new character of mine ; it is not so new as you think. Miss Desmond, you do not know how much I have staked on my conversation with you to-day—my whole future happiness ! I have come to tell

you that I love you. I know I am not worthy of you: no one can know it better; refined, elegant, and accomplished, I feel how inadequate a book-worm like myself must be to be the partner of your life; but I have started on a track which, but for you, most likely I never should have trod, and the hope of distinguishing myself for your sake stimulates my exertions. I may yet be successful: if I am, will you let me lay my honours at your feet, and will you deign to share them with me? Answer me, Miss Desmond: take pity on me and answer. You do not know how deeply I love you."

"You have only asked me to share your honours; suppose they never come," said Eva, quietly.

Charles was silent for awhile, then he answered—

"My heart would break."

Eva did not reply. For a time neither spoke. Charles pulled nervously at the long blades of grass within his reach, and bit them asunder, grinding them between his clenched teeth.

"Miss Desmond," he said, in a tone in which deep emotion struggled with firmness, "Will you not speak? will you give me no comfort?"

"People marry for better and for worse. If I

join my fate to yours it ought to be in trial as well as success."

"Let it be for what you will, if you will only take me."

"Should I not be an encumbrance to you? cripple your energies and retard your advancement?"

"Oh! Miss Desmond, you would be my guiding star, my cheering beam. With your wise and gentle counsels to animate my exertions, it seems to me as if I could soar to fame on wings."

She shook her head sadly.

"Your wings would find a delicate wife a very clogging reality."

"Will you let me be the judge?"

"You are not a very good one. You know but little of a woman's wants. You must at least be in possession of all the bearings of the case. I have not strong health, and I have no fortune."

"I do not want fortune, and the little I have shall be yours. I have few wants: I can live without almost everything."

"I should be sorry to see you do that. Can you think me so selfish?"

"Then we will share it. I will do whatever you like, only put me out of pain. I cannot tell you how madly I love you: night or day you

are never absent from my thoughts. I cannot read; I cannot write; you come between me and the page: even in my prayers you come between me and God. I cannot cool the fever of my veins—doubt, uncertainty, anguish is for ever gnawing at my heart. I have come three times determined to end this suspense, and each time when I saw you looking so lovely and so fragile, I thought what was I, or what had I, to undertake the care of such a treasure, and I have gone away more miserable than I came. But this agony cannot last: you now know all my madness, all that is cast upon this die: a life of happiness or the death of hope: give me an answer."

In his earnestness he had half raised himself from the ground, and was gazing with passionate eagerness in her face, watching with devouring avidity for her reply. She made none, but she placed her hand in his.

"Is it mine, Miss Desmond? Eva! darling Eva, one word!"

A very faint "Yes" was accorded to his impassioned importunity. In another moment his burning kisses were pressed on the pale cold lips that had uttered it.

Eva did not know, but at that very hour

Ernest Clifton and Clara Neville were kneeling before the altar in Hislop church receiving the nuptial benediction. *He had married for gold.*

The result of Charles's visit was communicated to Mrs. Desmond very gravely and very succinctly.

“Mother, Charles Stanhope has proposed for me, and I have accepted him.”

Mrs. Desmond saw that the calmness was only forced.

“My child,” she said, “I am delighted to hear it. You will be reconciled to it in a little while: you will get to like him; you will, indeed, Eva. He has every qualification for a good husband. You will find he will rise in his profession by his talents, and the time may yet come when you shall be glad that no other fate was yours.”

“Oh! mother, if you saw Ernest ——”

She burst into tears.

There was not a happier man in all Ireland than Charles Stanhope. His happiness had no alloy. He believed Eva's heart to be his; he knew nothing of the chill that had fallen on it. In accepting him some would have made it a point of honour to reveal it; but Eva thought

differently. She believed it her duty, now that she was going to become his wife, to study his happiness as much as possible, contributing to it all that lay in her power and giving to him all the heart she could; and she did not think that it was for his happiness to know how much there was that she could not give: that one image within it was yet unforgotten, one wound unhealed, one regret unvanquished. She did not believe it to be incumbent on her to pain him with this knowledge; but she believed it to be her duty to struggle against it, and she determined religiously to do so.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ASKING PAPA.

MYRA and her children did not add to the domestic felicity at Glenmore. Soured by disappointment, her naturally quick temper had become querulous and discontented. She made her children a worry; was fussy and unreasonable about them, and never satisfied unless they were in the room with her. People unaccustomed to children find the constant presence of those of that age very irksome and wearing; but, unwilling to add to Mrs. Hassard's infelicity, Eva and her mother endured it. The addition of so many mouths made the providing of the house considerably more burdensome, and Mr. Desmond—who was one of those people who seem to imagine that a shilling would turn into sixpence if laid out by any one but themselves, and consequently bought every item that was consumed—was very morose and ill-tempered at the perpetual demands upon his purse. He had spent one whole

morning, while Myra was confined to her bed with toothache, in invectives against matrimony, railing at its votaries and declaiming against its results, when Eva, from the window, espied Charles Stanhope approaching the house on foot. Knowing that he was coming for the purpose of demanding her hand, and that while her father was in that mood there was nothing to be done with him, she stole from the room to warn her lover against introducing the subject until a more favourable opportunity. He was so delighted to see her, so overjoyed at being able to press her to his heart, that he forgot to be discontented. He had brought her a present of a watch. Eva was shocked at the magnitude of the gift, the most costly she had ever received ; her rich relations not being much addicted to present making. She gently chided her lover for having expended so much on her.

“ How stupid of me,” he said, as he watched her putting a ribbon to it, “ I had a chain, and never thought of it. I have some ornaments ; I do not know what they are, but I know there is a chain among them. They were given to me by an officer who brought them from India ;

poor fellow! he died from consumption: I was with him in his last days, and he gave me the box shortly before he died. I must look for it, and bring it the next time I come."

"What brings that fellow so continually here?" said Mr. Desmond to his wife, when their visitor was gone.

"What fellow?"

"You know who I mean as well as I do; that Lurgan curate. I suppose he's not setting up to be married, and providing me with another family of paupers."

"His children may not be paupers."

"I don't know what else they'd be. If that's what he's at, the devil a foot he'll ever put in this house again. I'll have my own way this time."

"You had better not refuse him until he asks you. The Stanhopes were very kind to Eva in her illness."

"They were paid for it: that old trap put in her three months here. Only for vexing Eva, who was so delicate, I'd have put her out by the shoulders."

"Eva is still very delicate; I do not think she could bear any excitement."

“ Sick or well, she won’t marry a pauper : I ’ve had enough of that.”

“ I think Eva is too sensible to wish to marry a pauper.”

“ You were all very sensible about Myra’s match. It showed what description of sense was going,” he tapped his forehead according to his fashion, by way of illustration.

He soon had an opportunity of displaying his own. Charles Stanhope did not remain long without coming again to reconnoitre the enemy’s position. But he was a better philosopher than strategist. Eva was in the garden when he arrived ; her father chanced to be alone in the parlour, into which Charles was shown. He, awkwardly and without circumlocution, made known that the purport of his visit was to ask for Eva’s hand. Mr. Desmond not only flatly refused it, but gave him such a scolding for presuming to ask it, that the man of many ideas and few words was struck dumb. When he went to the garden to seek Eva, he had hardly recovered his speech sufficiently to explain to her what had occurred.

“ Myra’s ill-fortune has turned him against all matrimony for the present,” replied Eva.

“Leave it to me, I will try to bring him round. Do not look so unhappy, Mr. Stanhope; come what will, I will promise to keep my engagement if you continue to wish it.”

“Wish it! Eva, you do not know me if you can doubt it.”

That evening she told her father that she had been for some little time engaged to be married to Mr. Stanhope.

“And I,” he replied, “have, a still shorter time ago, told him that you shall do no such thing; so put it out of your head: I’ll have no more paupers here.”

“I am less likely to be a pauper married than single.”

“I’d be glad to know how you make that out?”

“Mr. Stanhope has 1,500*l.* to leave. If the worst came to the worst, I could exist on the interest of that; which I could not do upon what you have to leave me.”

“You don’t know what I have to leave you. Girls talking of what they don’t understand.”

“Too well I know what is left for me. If Mr. Stanhope’s life is spared, his talents will be sure to advance him in his profession.”

“ Much good his advancement will do you, if he dies in half a dozen years and leaves you with half a dozen hungry children.”

But Eva was firm. Her greatest difficulty had been in obtaining her own consent, but now that she had gained over her mind to it, she determined to carry it through. Her father finding he did no good by it, and always had the worst of the argument, at length gave up opposition, and when Charles next came contented himself with being grumpy and taciturn.

This time, Charles gave his betrothed the box of ornaments, which he had brought over on his last visit and carried back again in his pocket; having quite forgotten them in the consternation of his unceremonious rejection by her father. It contained a Trichinopoly chain, bracelets, and a brooch and pendants of filagree gold work, set with pearls. Eva’s admiration of them delighted him: he was sordid enough to take advantage of it, and bargain for a little payment besides thanks. He came often; he was very kind and devoted, and, at last, Eva began to miss him, and to look for his visits with pleasure. Mrs. Desmond marked with a mother’s ecstasy that her smile was slowly becoming less sad.

It was impossible to get Mr. Desmond to settle anything definitely about the marriage ; he either turned a deaf ear altogether, or else put it off on frivolous pretences, very exasperating to those concerned. Eva went on a visit to Charles's mother, who, though she was anxious Charles should look for a wife possessed of fortune, made no opposition to his choice, when once she found how entirely his happiness was centred in Eva ; and, moreover, speculated a little on the chances she might have, as so near a connection, of making Glenmore a frequent summer residence.

“ It is well to extract good from everything,” she thought, and called the thought philosophy.

Mr. Desmond had given a half-promise that he would forward to Dublin the money necessary for Eva's outfit ; but, when she was expecting it, she received a letter from him saying it was quite out of his power to do so, as every farthing he could command must go to make up the bill he had drawn on the bank to defray the expenses of Myra's journey home, and which was now becoming due. Eva was seated despondingly over this letter when Charles entered the room.

“What has vexed my love? May I read it?” he took the letter from her hand and read it.

“Eva, I see no use in waiting for your father’s help: as fast as one delay is done away with, he rises another equally frivolous and vexatious. He must have known all this letter contains before you left Glenmore. I am inclined to say with Shakespeare—

‘ ‘T were good to steal our marriage.’

What say you?”

Eva said nothing, and Charles went on. He represented that they should not be doing wrong to marry, when her father was only creating opposition and occasioning irritation, through his inequality of temper and instability of purpose: the conflict might long continue, yet eventually have to be terminated in the manner he now proposed. He argued eloquently, for his heart was in the subject. Eva could not gainsay what he advanced. She felt that such a mode of proceeding would, most probably, spare all parties a great deal of harassing disputation, and themselves much vexatious disappointment; further, she was supported by the belief that her mother would

not be averse to it. After a good deal of persuasion on her lover's part, she acquiesced in arrangements being made for their immediate marriage, and Mrs. Stanhope the elder was taken into counsel.

The preparations were not on a very extensive scale. The 1,500*l.* was settled upon Eva and her children. Charles went down to Kingstown to take lodgings for a week ; he bought a new pair of boots, a hat, half-a-dozen shirts, and the license. Eva laid out the few pounds she possessed, in a dress suitable for the ceremony, and in a little present for Charles' mother and another for her own.

They were married in St. Peter's Church, by Charles' old college tutor, the Professor of Moral Philosophy at Trinity, who quizzed his quondam pupil about sparing time from his books to look for a wife, and told him he must now study the philosophy of marriage. He made the bride a present of a carbuncle brooch, and when he clasped her icy hand, at the conclusion of the service, he did not feel quite sure whether Charles, in his abstraction over some unmastered problem, had not made a mistake and brought a statue instead of a woman to the altar.

“I do not think poor Stanhope has pitched on a very warm bed-fellow,” was his remark that evening to a brother Don, to whom he was relating the events of the morning.

“If she allows him a book and a light he will never find it out,” replied the other.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE HONEYMOON.

THE newly married couple returned to Haddington-road in the cab which had taken them to the church. Mrs. Stanhope the first said she would rather walk home through the fresh air than be shut up there in a cab. A proud and happy man was Charles Stanhope as he led his bride within his mother's door. He thought he had never seen her look so lovely or so elegant as she did in her bridal dress of lilac silk and her white bonnet. He had long deemed that she never could be aught to him, and now she was his own, his very own; no one else had any power over her, any right to her: oh! the rapture of that thought. He pressed her to his heart as if he would inwrap her within its folds; he could scarcely bring himself to let her out of his arms. Eva blushed and looked down beneath the deep ardour of that earnest gaze. His mother's rap was heard at the door, and he was obliged to control himself.

They conducted their arrangements on as economical and quiet a plan as possible. They went down by rail to Kingstown, carrying a week's luggage with them. A porter took it to their lodgings, while they went for a walk along the pier. They returned and took possession before dinner, and no one knew but they had been married twelve months. In the evening each wrote a letter; Eva's was to her mother, giving her the reasons for their having married as they did; Charles wrote to Mr. Desmond a formal announcement of his marriage.

That gentleman gave full vent to his wrath on receiving it. One would have thought, from the manner he inveighed against the marriage, that he had never contemplated its consummation at any time. He stormed at Charles, at Eva, at his wife; pitied himself for having such a pack belonging to him: all fools, fools all! Mrs. Desmond took matters very coolly: she was too accustomed to be found fault with for it to make much impression on her, and she was very glad that it was all over and that Eva was married. She tried to qualify her husband's letter of reply, but he told her he should write what he liked and take no advice from her: very

little he thought of her advice, or of the sense that dictated it; so he wrote an intemperate letter, which Charles, anxious to spare his wife pain, burned without letting her see.

The house in which Charles had selected lodgings was very pleasantly situated in Sussex Parade. There was a neat garden in front, the rooms were large and well furnished, and, it not being the season for Kingstown they had them cheap. The drawing-room windows overlooked the wide sea view; at the other end of the room was a small glass recess filled with green-house plants. The geraniums and heliotropes trained against the lattice were in flower, and shed a charming perfume through the air. This humble conservatory added very much to the bright elegant appearance of the room, and was a luxury most attractive to Eva's taste: indeed, the thought that it would pleasure her, had decided Charles on taking the lodgings.

Though the weather was cold it was very clear and bracing, and agreed with Eva. She and Charles were much out-of-doors, often seated on the rocks watching the dash of the spray against the perpendicular and rocky sides of Howth Hill, or the play of the cold sunlight upon the white

walls of its scattered buildings; or else enjoying the more cultivated beauty of their home view—the terrace shores with their rows of handsome houses, the undulating wood beyond besprinkled with mimic castles (for suburban residences love fantastic shapes); the picturesque and varied hill of Killiney, and the bold grandeur of the Wicklow mountains, a background of surpassing beauty.

Sometimes they strolled along the jetty watching the English packets come in and go out, amused at the bustle and excitement, in which everyone is so intent upon his own affairs, so tenderly attentive to his own luggage that he cannot bear to let it out of his sight. Located within a stone's throw of the landing place, they often walked down at ten o'clock at night to see the Holyhead packet arrive. A very pretty sight it is to see her sweeping round the lighthouse into the harbour, a blue and red light at the paddles and a bright flame-coloured one at the masthead. Like a great black bird with brilliant eyes and top knot, she swoops along and nears the pier. As she comes alongside a dozen torches pour out their volumes of blaze, and the deck is as light as day; the indistinct and muffled figures, which were scarcely discernible as she approached,

are now discovered to be active energetic owners of property. The gangway is lowered, and porters rush rapidly down to make their harvest. Gentlemen with travelling caps, and coat collars turned up to cover their ears, are rushing about that human hive intent upon righting themselves. “Where’s my portmanteau? Porter, here! That’s my hat-case. Let go that travelling bag, sir! I did not engage you, you rascal. Where are the children? Have an eye to this luggage, my dear!” are exclamations heard on every side. Who is that gentleman who is bawling so lustily to a porter above? He is one not much used to travel, and he finds his portmanteau is gone on shore, and that the one he has been holding so knowingly under his knee has been claimed by its more collected owner. There is a lad, almost a boy, in an hussar undress cap, lighting a cigar which he holds to his downy lip, and lisping in an English accent—

“I say, porter, forward my luggage to Dublin Castle, and get me a cab for Morrison’s.”

“Shure, won’t yer honour go in the thrain.”

“Oh, is there a train here?”

“Bedad there is, yer honer. Sorrow another way o’ goin’ this time o’ night. I’ll take care of

yer honer's luggage, and see it myself into the van : this is it, sir, with the A B C on it?"

"A. D. C. yes. My fellow ought to be here."

"Very likely he's above, yer honer. He wouldn't be let down till the luggage is up. Never fear, yer honer, it's I can mind luggage equal to any sodger : the captin —"

"Holloa ! you, sir!"

The dandy's cap has been knocked awry by a great bale of the morning's *Times*, travelling up the gangway on a porter's back. One mother appears to be counting her children's hands—no, she is only seeing if they all have their gloves on. Another, an older woman, is trying to battle her way back through the opposing current ; she has forgotten her sachet in the berth, and her purse was in it ; she only discovered her error when the ship's porter came to be paid. One pale girl, with her bonnet strings untied, is leaning over the side of the vessel, trying to recognise among the faces on the pier the one that she has a claim upon ; she does not know that she shall never behold that kind old face again : that she is an orphan. A stranger is there to break the news : that is he who is waiting at the top of the gangway for a passage down. One weak, wrathful, old man is

wresting his luggage from the porter who has carried it up; never in his life having given a porter more than twopence, he does not understand the demand that has been made for a rate on every article. He is very angry, and calls the man a rascal; the man does not care a button for him, he has the law on his side; the weak, wrathful, old man will have to pay. There is a tender embrace between that gentleman rolled up in the plaid and the young lady who stands at the top of the gangway. It has been the first absence of their married life, and the young, impatient wife has come down with the servant to greet him on the pier.

“Were you seasick, dearest?”

“No, love; I was thinking of the joy of this meeting all the way,” were the sentences they were exchanging as they passed Charles and Eva, who were standing a little aloof, amused and interested spectators of the busy scene.

Charles Stanhope had saved 100*l.* Since he first saw Eva he had never touched a farthing of the interest of his 1,500*l.* Some undefined glimmer of far-off hope had prevented him: he *might* some day want it, so he lived on his stipend and left the other to accumulate. This 100*l.* he

gave to Eva the day after her marriage, telling her to spend it as she best liked in setting herself up housekeeping.

“But, dear Charles, I shall consult you on its expenditure,” she replied.

“I have no wish that you should, unless you think I can be of use to you; you understand these things better than I do. If it were possible that any kind of piano could be procured out of it I should be glad: I so like to hear you sing; but I know so little of the requirements of a woman, I have no idea whether it would be possible. One thing you must remember; it is all the ready money I have. I shall have no more to give you except from my income; something over thirty pounds a quarter, that will be: I must keep some for charity.”

“And for your own wants, Charles.”

“My wants are very few, Eva.”

“I must look after them myself. I want to make a small outlay on you this moment.”

“For what?”

“To have your hair cut.”

“It is not too long.”

“It is, dear.”

“Not it; it keeps me warm.”

“ You, who study so much, ought to keep your head cool. Do come with me to a hairdresser. Will you, love ? ”

He shook his head.

“ It is too soon to refuse your wife a request.”

“ Nothing like beginning in time.”

She coaxed him a little longer, but he would not consent to the hairdresser ; all she could effect was permission to take a little off herself, which she did : she was afraid of cutting off too much at a time lest he should take cold, and her first innovation on his appearance be a failure. She divided it according to the fashion of the day, oiled and brushed it ; but the moment she ceased brushing, the hair, stubborn from long neglect, fell back into its former habit of ascetical straightness : however, she persevered, and brushed away every day ; and at the end of a fortnight her labour began to tell. She trimmed his whiskers, and now that his hair was cared for, it was dark and glossy, and the ends waved a little, which they had shown no inclination to do when he wore it so long. Her next crusade was against his collars. He wore them fast to his shirt, and so large, that his head was buried nearly to the top of his ears in them. Many men accustomed to slack throat

covering resist the adoption of loose collars as an abridgment of their comfort; Charles rebelled lustily; Eva appeared to succumb, but she did not: she only bided her time. One favourite conceit she cherished, to assimilate her husband's dress as nearly as possible to that which had been worn by Ernest Clifton, and which had become identified in her mind with the perfection of the clerical character: perhaps some latent idea lurked in her heart, that the outer similarity might sometimes cheat her into the illusion of a resemblance.

"I am going to talk to you about a waistcoat I want you to get," said she, clasping her hands upon his shoulder, and looking up at him coaxingly as she thus leaned, the graceful bindweed on the scraggy thorn.

He put his arm round her.

"Eva," he replied, gravely, "my wardrobe will necessarily be always very scanty."

"Why so?"

"Because I shall possess no means of having it otherwise."

"You do not know how much farther a woman can make money go than a man."

"There is a woman to be dressed out of it, now. I should not like to see you shabby."

“Would you know if I were shabby?”

“I think I should: I know you look very nice, now.”

“But this one waistcoat, to make you match me.”

He smiled.

“That would not be easy; and I have a very good one.”

“It is not the right shape.”

“You are very extravagant.”

“It is too soon to find out my faults; we are not a week married yet.”

“I am not the first who thought his mistress faultless, and found when he married she was mortal.”

“Charles,” she said, gravely, “did you think I was faultless when you married me?”

“I am afraid I am foolish enough to believe so still.” He drew her closer within his arms and kissed her forehead. “Sit on my knee, love; I want to talk to you of something more serious than a waistcoat: I wish you to read this letter.” He pulled one from his pocket, directed to the Rev. Charles Hamilton Stanhope, 2, Haddington Road.

“When did you get this?” asked his wife.

“This afternoon. It came to my mother’s this morning; she forwarded it by the next mail.”

Eva opened and read it. It ran thus:—

“MY DEAR SIR,

The failure of a steam company in which I had invested a large capital, has caused so great an alteration in my circumstances, it will oblige me to make a similar one in my expenditure. The income of this living being so small, I do not think the curate of an incumbent dependent on it, without private funds at his disposal, could consider 50*l.* a year an inadequate proportion as his stipend. More it will not be in my power to give. Should you not wish to remain under the altered circumstances, you have my permission to seek for a more lucrative engagement. I write this as soon as I myself am aware of it, thinking, perhaps, it may have influence on some arrangements which report says you are about to make. I remain, dear sir,

Yours faithfully,

“ARUNDEL BERESFORD.”

Eva put her finger on the last paragraph, and said, smiling—

“ That precaution came too late ; I am glad it did.”

“ Why, love ? ”

“ Because it has saved us doing a foolish thing.”

“ What ? ”

“ Why, marrying with the knowledge that you had but 50*l.* a year stipend.”

“ Would you have married me with the knowledge ? ”

“ Do not make me own my foolishness, Charles ; let me hedge myself under benefit of the doubt. It was considerate though in Mr. Beresford. How formally he writes, ‘ My dear Sir,’ to one he has known so long.”

“ No man better knows how to keep a curate at a distance. But what do you say to the substance of the letter ? ”

“ What have I to say ? I suppose we have nothing to do but to look out for a better place ; keep this until we get one. I am glad we had the letter before we went down.”

“ Why ? ”

“ Because as we are not going to stop there we have no occasion to study appearance. I will not lay out any thing ; take whatever I find at your lodgings.”

" You will find little there ; it is a poor home, my Eva. But it always contented me until I knew you ; then I wished I had a better one to offer you."

" You will be there, and wherever you are is my home henceforth and for ever."

He kissed her gratefully.

The week for which Charles had taken the lodgings had expired. To him it had passed rapidly ; he had never known before what it was to be perfectly happy. True that he was always pleased and contented when alone with his books ; but that is a different kind of feeling to the warm, heartfelt beams of social happiness. A little of Eva's old smile was coming back to her face. It was but a faint resemblance, still it was one. Sometimes her conscience smote her ; she knew that she did not give back to her husband the deep love he felt for her ; she felt that another image lingered in her heart, shattered indeed, yet at times, the fragments combining and startling her with their vivid reality. Then would she busy every thought for her husband and his welfare ; try to crush back the unbidden vision that intruded, by the healthy active occupations of duty, trusting to time and her own true heart

to vanquish an affection which had taken so tenacious and so embittering a hold on her.

She returned with her husband to Dublin. They were to spend one night at his mother's before they proceeded to Lurgan. The change in her son's outward man charmed Mrs. Stanhope. It had always been a regret to her that he was what she called "so unlike other people." She had never seen a being improve so much in one week ; and her admiration had begun to irritate him, when Eva judiciously drew her attention off him, by asking her advice on some household matters.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE CURATE'S HOME.

IT was late when Charles and his bride arrived at their lodgings in Lurgan. They had some tea and went to bed. Next day, as Charles was obliged to go out immediately after breakfast, Eva had time and opportunity to study her new home.

It was a dull-looking room enough, that sitting-room of theirs, though it was lighted by two good sized windows. The carpet was dark and worn, the moreen of that dusky red so often seen in the parlours of old-fashioned houses ; the draperies were edged with a fringe composed of a red edging with little black bobs (one half of which were absent) depending from it. The tables, of a wood so darkened by time that they looked black, were loaded with books and litter ; not the fashionable litter that gives a room a cosy inhabited look, but untidy, unsightly litter : heaps of brown paper

taken off parcels and carelessly thrown aside, linen rags which Charles had by him for poor people's sores, old gloves, tattered portfolios, reams of paper, soiled bands he had thrown crumpled from his pocket after service, the jagged cuff of an old coat which had come off bodily in his hand one night, as he tugged at it over a knotty dogma. In one corner of the room was a piece of furniture not unlike a tall narrow dresser; the top part consisted of open shelves, on which were ranged cups and saucers, a teapot, and other conveniences; the bottom half was a cupboard, now full of rubbish of a most heterogeneous description.

Altogether it was a most uninviting looking place, for the display of a bride's taste; but Eva set to work on it. Her first act was to pull down the dirty muslin half blinds which obscured what light might be had, and get the windows cleaned. It was wonderful what an influx of light was acquired by the last operation.

"I wonder when they were cleaned before," thought Eva, as she watched the dirt scraping off; if I had my philosopher here he might calculate by the deposits. Then the paint was washed, the dresser cleaned, and the crockery banished. On

the shelves, Eva ranged her husband's books, now in heaps on the floor and tables. One table with a drawer she assigned for his use, placing his papers in the drawer with as undisturbing a hand as she could: writing materials and a few indispensable books were on it. Another table she appropriated for herself; so as to leave the centre table comparatively free: it was to be used for meals. She pulled the sofa from between the windows, where it had stood with its back to the wall for a century, placing it on one side the fire; an old but comfortable arm chair was on the other, near the dresser, or, as it was now to be called, the book-case. The cupboard portion Eva allotted as the receptacle for tea, sugar, jam, and such necessary luxuries. It took some little trouble to make the key turn; it had been long since it was asked to do so; however, between oiling and scouring, that desirable object was at length effected.

Her labours were just completed when the rector's wife was announced. She was a low-minded pompous woman, and talked dictatorially and patronizingly, charmed to have a curate's wife to ride over. But she scarcely knew which to be more surprised at, the change in the appearance of Charles' room, or at the occupant she found there.

He had better taste than she gave him credit for. He came home to dinner: when it was cleared away, a lamp (which Eva had brought from Dublin) lighted on the table, and a cheerful fire blazing in the grate, the hitherto comfortless curate looked about the room amazed at its coziness: his eyes rested on the book-shelves. A hand was warningly laid on his shoulder.

“No loving looks at those old mistresses; a wife is a jealous thing.”

He turned his face round to kiss the hand that lay on his shoulder. “When the whole heart is the wife's, will she not let the head have its books?”

“In due season; she demands every thing now, and will until tea. She feels she has not had her rights to-day; that her husband has forgotten he has increased his responsibilities.”

“If I have increased my responsibilities, I have increased my comforts as well. I did not think this old room could be made to look so bright.”

“A woman's hand soon changes the hermit's cell.”

“Come into my arms, and let me feel that I have a real human woman, not some spirit of light that will vanish when I look away.”

Leaning against his shoulder she recounted the employments of the day, all the rubbish burnt, all the dirt cleared out; she playfully described the visit she had received: how Mrs. Beresford had taken such pains to impress on her how much higher in the social scale was a rector's wife than a curate's; how much grander those who had lost their money than those who had none to lose; how she had instructed her in her duty, "which, as well as I could make out," said Eva, "was to do nothing but walk after her, looking at what she did—admiring, I suppose."

"What did you say?"

"Very little. If she was so loquaciously proud, I was silently so."

"A curate's wife must not be proud any way."

"When I am a rector's, may I?"

"That is so far off, you will be wise enough to judge for yourself when it comes."

"Well, till then, a little self-dignity, Charles?"

He shook his head. "Did she rile you?"

"A little, I believe. As I was going to stop so short a time in the place, I thought it was hardly worth her while teaching me my business: she might have reserved her instruction for the new maid."

"However, your duties are to be light."

"I do not know that, Charles. Judging by the way she bustled about here, it would give me something to do to keep up with her."

"You are gayer than I thought, my Eva. I used to think you pensive; at times your look was sad. Now your merry prattle charms my heart."

"I am happier than I was, Charles. She looked up in his face with a smile, shorn of some of its former beams, it is true, yet, for any one who had not known it otherwise, a very bright one.

"God keep you so, my loved one," was the prayer of his heart.

Some weeks glided smoothly past. Charles was on the look out for other occupation, but, as yet, had been unsuccessful; however, as the term he had engaged for was not yet expired, his stipend could not be lowered.

His time was fully occupied; the mornings were employed in the composition of his sermons; the whole day, with the exception of an hour or two reserved for a walk with his wife, was devoted to parochial duty; from tea-time till midnight he studied. He felt completely happy, and could this period of bliss have continued, it is probable he would have been quite contented to continue as

he was: not so Eva. True that she felt contented and happy; she had now an interest in life; a heart to cheer and an intellect to stimulate to exertion. She was very desirous of her husband having a more extended range of labor, and being the satellite of a less jealous planet than Mr. Beresford: one that would not want to do all the shining himself.

Charles did not find it as easy to suit himself in a curacy as might be supposed from his erudite and sterling qualifications; some he applied for were already filled up, to some which sought him there were insuperable objections. He had never had less than 100*l.* a year stipend; now that he needed it more, he did not wish to lower his terms. At last he heard of one in the neighbourhood of Charlemont likely to suit him. There was a separate service, under the sole guidance of the curate, he was told. This was a circumstance he was disposed to like: he wrote to offer himself. The rector wished to see him. It was situated about twenty miles distant. A public car went within ten of it; there was no conveyance beyond. Charles determined to take the car next morning, walk the rest of the way, and meet the car as it returned in the evening. Eva made him up a sandwich and a

flask of porter, and he started. She expected him back to dinner, but he did not come ; the car came in without him. She thought the rector must have kept him, yet she wondered at Charles staying ; she did not give him up yet. She had desired the chops not to be put down till he came ; she did not think they were enough to divide, so, when the car arrived empty, she eat a slice of bread and butter and kept the chops for tea, on the chance of his coming. For long he did not come ; the fire had been often replenished and burnt down again ; the lamp often trimmed ; Eva began to be very uneasy. Perhaps, until now, she was not aware how fond she had become of him. At last his foot was on the stair ; she met him at the door ; there was a long embrace.

“ I have been so uneasy, Charles : how very late you are ! ”

“ It has been a long day, and I expect a long day lost,” he said, leading her to the fire.

“ Would not the curacy do ? ”

“ Not unless I am hard pushed. He will only give 75*l.* ; requires every hour of my time ; and seems ten times as pompous and self-conceited as Beresford.”

“ I am sorry you went there at all,” said Eva.

“ So shall I be if I get anything better.”

Here the servant brought up the chops ; Eva settled them and his tea on a little table by the sofa which Charles had thrown himself on ; as he was eating them, she said—

“ But, Charles, dear, what kept you so late ? I was amazed when the car came in without you : I thought you would sleep there.”

“ That was not likely. He had visitors with him, and kept me waiting so long that I missed the car returning, and had to walk.”

“ Did you walk all the way home ! twenty miles ?”

“ Yes.”

“ Then you have walked thirty miles to day !” and Eva looked in despair.

“ Yes ! even these long legs of mine feel as if they had had enough of it. But I shall sleep it off. Don’t look so, Eva,” he exclaimed as he looked up. “ I have had a disagreeable day, but nothing in it can pain me as that grieved look from you. I did very well. I had the luncheon you put up for me, and very acceptable I found it.”

“ Did he give you no luncheon ?”

“ Not a bit ; when he saw the skirts of my coat fairly through the door, he asked, if I would

like a glass of wine after my walk: I must have wanted one badly to take it."

"Did you see Mrs. Seymour?"

"No: at least not to know her: I saw some ladies in a room through an open door I passed. There were visitors there, as I tell you. I was shown into the study, as I said I came on business."

"Charles, dear, why did you say that?"

"Because it was the case; why shouldn't I?"

"I would have gone as one gentleman going to see another—as an equal."

"Mr. Seymour does not seem to consider his curate his equal."

"I would not subscribe to that doctrine at all."

"Then you had better not go there; for I suspect it is one of the articles to be sworn to."

"What passed between you?"

"A good deal: Mr. Seymour likes to hear himself talk. He inquired as to my attainments and qualifications. I told him what honours I had gained in college; that I was scholar, gold medalist in both science and classics each year, &c. He inquired if I had kept up my learning since; I replied, as much as my parochial duties admitted

of, and offered him any proof he wished ; I was quite willing he should examine me. He declared off, and came more to the purpose—my work, and what I was to get for doing it."

" Is the work heavy ? "

" Very : very hard visiting, clubs and schools to no end to be looked after, and all their accounts kept by the curate ; that involves a great deal of night-work, the time I study."

" Did you hear anything about the separate service ? "

" Yes ; more than I wished. It is at a school-house, five miles from the church ; at three o'clock. I am to read prayers for the rector in the morning, and, as I have to walk to the school-house, to be in time, must start when he goes to robe for the sermon. I have a full service and sermon to myself there, and must be back for evening service in the church, at half-past six, when I am to preach."

" Dear Charles, you could not do it."

" If that were the only objection, I might manage one hard day in seven. But the total loss of my time is what I am unwilling to consent to. I did not much like the man ; but people cannot stick at trifles."

" I hope you may never have to go near him

again. To think of his giving you nothing to eat after your long walk!"

"Luckily I had your sandwich, and when I was safe out of his premises, I sat down on a stone and eat it. The car had passed an hour when I got to Craig."

He gave a tired sigh, and dozed a few minutes. Eva looked regretfully at him as he lay asleep. Now that his hair was cut and brushed, his high intellectual forehead was visible; she thought what a wealth of knowledge lay within it: what concentrated depths of reasoning, patient research, and refined philosophy. Yet, how hard to earn his bread! every moment of time so valuable for study extorted for so penurious a pittance; "yet," thought she, "his time will come; intellect guided by energy *must* work upwards: he has the intellect, and I think I have the energy."

"Give me my work, Eva dear," he said, when he saw her preparing to go to bed.

"Will you not rest to-night?" she asked.

"I will not idle, love; reading will rest me."

She gave him his book and note book, and placed his reading lamp on the table beside him, kissed him, and went to bed.

There was another, whose wife had Eva been,

she would not have left his side that night until she had coaxed or chided him to bed and rest. Had she dealt thus with Charles, his lot would have been different. However wondrously contrived, the machine cannot move unless it is set in motion.

CHAPTER XXVI.

GOD HELPS THOSE WHO HELP THEMSELVES.

CHARLES heard of several other curacies; but none, on examination, were found to suit him. He began to be down-hearted, and told Eva he thought they must remain where they were. Eva shook her head reprovingly. That very day Mr. Beresford informed him that he had engaged a successor to him. Charles came home looking worried and unhappy; Eva was reading a newspaper some one had lent her, when he entered the sitting room.

“ I see Mr. Griffin’s arrival in Dublin in this paper,” she remarked, as she resumed her occupation after welcoming her husband.

“ Who is Mr. Griffin? ”

“ A gentleman I knew in England, a clergyman. Ah! Charles, I wish you had his curacy—yet, I ought not to covet my neighbour’s goods; it is

occupied." There was a slight quiver in the down-cast eyelid.

"What brings him to Dublin?"

"He married a second time—since I knew him—an Irish lady whom he met travelling. I suppose he has come to visit her family."

"Put aside the paper, Eva dear; I want to talk to you of a clergyman nearer home."

She gave him her attention. He told her what Mr. Beresford had just said to him. Eva looked blank.

"I think, love, I had better write and close with Mr. Seymour."

"I do not like that curacy for you, dearest. Such a hard Sunday, and no time for literary labour."

"Neither do I like it; but what can I do? I cannot starve."

"Dear Charles, we are not hungry yet. If the worse comes to the worst we can live on the 50*l.* interest while you look about."

"Impossible, child! How could two people get board and lodging, to say nothing of anything else, for a pound a week. And you, Eva! You to be reduced to this! Why did I marry to bring you into poverty!" He walked up and down the room

hastily ; Eva saw he was greatly agitated. She got up and gently laying her hand on his arm walked with him.

“ You must not regret your marriage, dear, or your wife will be sad. You cannot think how little I can live on ; and, should there be need, I know I could earn money : I can do a great many things. But there will not be need,” she said, seeing his impatient, agonized gesture. “ I ’ll tell you how we could manage. We could go to your mother’s, and allow her what we should cost her extra : you are not likely to be long unemployed, and I have the 100*l.* you gave me yet untouched. Charles, dear, you must not despond : nothing was ever yet conquered by despondency. Some of the answers to your applications have not yet come in : who knows what to-morrow’s post will do for us.”

She stroked his face soothingly with her soft palm ; she drew down his head and kissed his cheek, the arm that drew it down remaining round his neck ; she whispered brave words of reassurance and gentle ones of love. A fig for your philosophy, O ye sages ! In sorrow or in pain, what comforting elixir can ye extract from a realm of it equal to one warm smile from a woman’s heart.

When she saw the cloud dispersing from his brow,

Eva led her husband to his books, and taking her work sat down near him. She did not leave him that day; they went to walk together: Charles had people to see in the country, so leaving the poor town behind them, they took their way through the fields. It was early summer, and nature is very attractive then. The freshly clothed trees are of so delicate a green, the tillage fields are displaying their promise of a harvest, the herbage is studded with blossoms, the concert of nature from wood and water, bird and bee, invites the ear to enjoyment without disturbing the mind's repose. Occupied as Charles' thoughts were, he felt all this, and when he returned he felt more composed, and his spirit had regained much of the nerve which had failed it in the morning.

The next day he had two funeral services to perform. Mr. Beresford never read the funeral service except for gentry, so Charles buried all the poor people. One was to be before breakfast, the other at six o'clock in the evening. Eva waited breakfast for him, he was late.

“Charles, dear, there came no letters,” she said, when he entered.

“I have had them; I called for them while I waited for the funeral.”

“ Any news ? ”

“ You shall have them when you have break-fasted.”

At the conclusion of the meal, he drew several letters from his pocket and gave them to his wife. She read them, but her face showed no indication that they contained anything agreeable.

“ I think,” said Charles, “ we had better enact Epimetheus and shut down Pandora’s lid before Hope gets out. I will write to Mr. Seymour to-day.” He walked to the window and looked out, biting his lip bitterly. It was an ugly look-out into that narrow street, one not likely to soothe an anxious man.

“ The ‘ Ecclesiastical Gazette’ ought to be here to-day, did you get it ? ” said his wife.

“ Yes, here it is.”

“ A great many ‘ curates wanted ; ’ Charles, come and look.”

They sat on the sofa together, looking the advertisements over. Charles read out, commenting as he went along.

“ ‘ Wanted a curate to whom stipend is not a primary object’—That won’t do ; stipend is a primary object. ‘ Wanted an unmarried curate

who would consider a furnished house sufficient remuneration'— I should not answer that description. 'Wanted a curate whose views are in accordance with the Prayer-book,'—Mine are in accordance with the Bible. 'Wanted for a parish where the rentcharge is only 90*l.*'—He will want some one richer than me. 'Wanted, in a parish where there is daily service, a sound Churchman'— That means a Puseyite. 'The use of a large, handsome furnished parsonage, amidst beautiful scenery, would be given to a clergyman, who would undertake the duties of the incumbent for a year or more.'—There is an opportunity of coming it grand, if one had anything to eat. You see, Eva, even if I went to England, and could get them, there is not one of these curacies offered that would suit me. Eva did not hear; her eyes were riveted on one portion of the paper, distant from the advertisements, which had fallen on the floor and which she had picked up. For a moment an expression of acute pain crossed her face, then it brightened.

"What do you see so interesting, Eva?"

"The rector of Grimstone Priory is dead," said she, speaking very slow.

"Do you think they would give it to me?" he

asked, sarcastically. He did not altogether like that anything should divide her attention with him just then.

“No, dear: it is appropriated. It is the living which was purchased for—for the occupant of Mr. Griffin’s curacy that I was speaking to you of yesterday. That curacy will now be vacant; it is not impossible that you might get it. Mr. Griffin is now in Dublin, you must go to him this very day.”

“I will write.”

“Writing will not do as well. He is sure to have scores of applications: he had last time; it is so desirable a thing: a sole charge, 150*l.* a year, house, garden, and field.”

“He will never give that to a stranger, Eva. Some friend or relation of his own will get it.”

“Of course, if he has one: if he has not, Edward Phillips will want it. However, one cousin is as good as another: we will try for it. I think I will go with you, to introduce you. What time does the train go?”

“I cannot go to-day: I have this funeral; and the inspector is coming to the schools, so I shall have to be present.”

“Then I will go without you. Don’t shake your head, Charles. Why not?”

“Wait till to-morrow; we will talk it over: then if we think it any use, I can go with you, to-morrow.”

“And perhaps find that to-night’s mail carried over a letter giving it away. No, Charles; no time is to be lost. Let me go up by the train; I will see Mr. Griffin, and if he does not prefer any one else, you can come up to-morrow. I will stay at your mother’s to-night; or if you do not like that, I will return by the late train. Do not look so dissatisfied, Charles; do not, love. Come into our room and talk to me while I get ready. I will get ready, even if you do not allow me to go afterwards. I will promise not to stay away the night without your permission; but do let me go: it is such a thing to let slip away, if exertion can get it. If he cannot give it, I will return by the last train; if he promises it, I could stay and write to you: you could come up to-morrow to see him.” While she talked she had been hastily putting up some things in a small portmanteau and changing her dress.

“Why do you dress so smart?” asked Charles, when he saw her put on her lilac silk.

“Because nobody cares to oblige shabby looking people ; Mr. Griffin as little as most others.”

“But you are travelling.”

“He is not to know that. I do not mean to tell him that I fled up like a lapwing after his curacy.”

“What will you say then ?”

“You shall hear to-morrow.”

“Say nothing but the truth, Eva.”

“I do not deserve that, Charles. You never heard me tell an untruth yet.”

“No, love ; I never did : forgive me. I have been strangely worried these last few days, and your going worries me now.”

“Don’t let that worry you, Charles, dear. Here is the key of the tea store, in case I don’t come back to-night—don’t leave it about, love. Now get the boy to come and carry my portmanteau.”

She had dressed herself very becomingly ; a large white shawl over her shoulders, and her pretty wedding bonnet, the orange blossoms replaced by lilac flowers. Charles looked admiringly at her elegant figure ; he felt very irresolute, unwilling to let her go, yet unable to resist her pleading and to dash the hope she seemed so full of, but which he did not share. He called

the boy and started him with the portmanteau. “ Give me a kiss, Charles, and then come with me to the train.”

They set out; Eva talked all the way: she seemed afraid of allowing a pause, lest Charles should take advantage of it to retract the permission, more taken than given, for her departure. She would have taken a second class ticket, but he would not listen to it; he put her into a first class carriage.

“ Must I be back to-night ? ” she asked.

“ No ; I will not have you out so late. I have half a mind to go up to you by the late train.”

“ Do not do that, darling ; if it is no use, why go to the expense.”

She thought of him: he would be less mortified at not getting the curacy if he did not come to look for it.

“ Good-bye, Charles ! You know we may be disappointed ; he may have promised it to some one else, so do not be too sanguine ; ”—the train moved on.

“ That caution is more necessary from me to you,” thought Charles, as he turned and retraced his steps homeward. He thought the room

looked as dull and dingy as it had ever done, when he entered it alone. He put on his hat again, and with a sigh went forth.

Arrived in Dublin Eva engaged a cab by the hour. Eva was aware of the value of appearance even in a cab. She rejected the tattered and dirty ones which offered, and chose a nice clean one, newly painted. The portmanteau was stowed away under the seat, quite concealed from the most prying eye by her railway rug. She ordered the man to drive to the address she had seen in the paper: it was in Leeson-street. As she drove along Stephen's-green the throbs of her heart began to beat louder; she felt a painful choking in her throat as she drew up at the door. She struggled against agitation, and tried to reason herself into bravery: after all she was but coming to ask for what some one must get; and she had more to give in return than many: it was but a bargain: service for payment. Why should she feel nervous? Every bargain must have two parties concerned in it—*must* have, it is true; yet every stroke of the cabman's loud double knock seemed to strike upon her heart and vibrate through her system. She half wished herself back in Lurgan when she saw the footman stand-

ing with the door open. Mr. Griffin was in the house.

“Who shall I say, ma’am?” said the man, as he preceded her up the broad staircase.

“No name: Mr. Griffin will know me.”

The drawing-room door was thrown open.

“A lady to Mr. Griffin,” said the footman.

With a desperate struggle against emotion, Eva entered with all the graceful ease of refined conventionalism. Mr. Griffin was writing at a table near the window; his wife beside him on a sofa.

“Miss Desmond!” exclaimed the gentleman, looking up; in his haste to meet her, tumbling over his wife’s dog, “this is an unexpected pleasure. I am charmed to see you, and looking so well,”—excitement had brought the colour into Eva’s cheeks—“Allow me to introduce you to my wife, Mrs. Griffin. Miss Desmond.”

Eva felt awkward, but she did not know how to tell him she was no longer Miss Desmond. The ladies curtesied politely, and Eva seated herself in the fauteuil placed for her. They conversed for a little while on general topics. When they flagged, Mr. Griffin said—

“It is now some time, Miss Desmond, since you have been among us. You have not lately visited your relatives in Wiltshire.”

“Not longer than usual, is it?” replied Eva. “I think I have seldom visited them more than once in two years.”

“Oh! you ought to come and settle there entirely. It leaves quite a blank in the county when you go out of it. Come back with me, now, when I am going: I will promise to escort you safely into the drawing-room at Oakstone, and I expect I shall get kisses apiece from the girls for my trouble, (with a shrug of his shoulders at his wife) eh?”

“I would rather you escorted me into the parsonage at Hilton,” said Eva, with a smile at her own boldness. “It is principally on that subject that I am here to-day. We heard that the curacy of Hilton had become vacant, and my husband —”

“Your husband!” interrupted Mr. Griffin, with ludicrous surprise. “Why, Miss Desmond! what blunders I have been making.”

Eva laughed; so did Mrs. Griffin.

“You had better not continue them, my dear,” said the latter lady.

“Why this amazes me! I wonder I never heard of this at Oakstone. And what am I to call you, may I ask?”

“My name is Stanhope now. My husband is a clergyman. He is leaving his present curacy in consequence of the altered circumstances of the rector, who speculated and lost his fortune. Finding you would be likely to want a curate for Hilton, I ventured on the strength of old acquaintance to call and ask you—if you have no friend of your own to bestow it on—to consider my husband’s qualifications. He took high honours in College; was a Scholar, and has I don’t know how many gold medals.”

“Must be a clever man. I have no one I particularly wish to give the curacy to. Phillips would like it, and I thought of giving it to him on my friend Clifton’s account. Indeed, when you came in I was in the act of writing to offer it to him; but good a parson as he is, his is not a family one would choose from preference to transplant into their parish: she is a poor creature. If your husband and I can come to an agreement, I suppose the obligation to my friend Clifton will be the same; and I expect, apart from my own gratification, I shall have the gratitude of the

whole neighbourhood if I procure so great an acquisition for it as Mrs. Stanhope. No blushes! no thanks! It is all truth. Is Mr. Stanhope in town? Are you staying in Dublin?"

"I am at present: my husband is at Lurgan; he seldom leaves his curacy, having a great deal to do, and besides, is a bookish man. But he will be in town to-morrow, and could call if you think of engaging him."

"I shall be out a good deal to-morrow. At what time do you think he is likely to be here?"

"At any hour you name after the Northern train comes in."

"Where are you staying?"

"Haddington-road: Number 2."

"Stay! I shall be in that direction, and will call at your house in the course of the morning and make Mr. Stanhope's acquaintance."

"Thank you very much. I hope Mrs. Griffin will accompany you; I am happy to have had the pleasure of being introduced to her."

With a bow of winning grace to the lady, Eva rose to go. Mr. Griffin offered his arm.

"Did you walk?"

“No ; my cab is waiting for me.”

“I shall be charmed, indeed, if I get you back into our neighbourhood,” he said, as he led her down the stairs. “I once thought you would have inhabited that little parsonage of mine under different circumstances ; but it seems the fates decreed it otherwise. You Irish ladies play sad work with us poor Englishmen. Ernest Clifton’s face wore a cloud for many a day after you ran away so quickly from Oakstone that last time ; and I—look at me !”

He made a half-ludicrous, half-languishing grimace at his own pitiful case, and presenting his hand with a low bow, handed his elegant visitor into her cab, little heeding how his words were impaling her.

“To the nearest stationer’s,” was the direction she gave the man, and lying back in the cab her full heart relieved itself in a loud burst of weeping. Though Eva had stifled all personal feeling, and suffered nothing to interfere with her exertions for her husband’s advancement and welfare, she could not so ignore remembrance as to be able to contemplate returning to Wiltshire otherwise than as a painful expediency. But it was a step the expediency of which she con-

sidered unquestionable, and without hesitation she continued to work it out. The paroxysm over, her face was again calm when the cab drew up at a stationer's in Grafton-street. As she stepped from the cab she saw her Lurgan landlord enter a grocer's shop a door or two above the stationer's ; she followed him.

“ Good-morning, Mr. McDonagh.”

“ Good - morning, kindly, ma'am ; I did not 'spect to meet you here, ma'am.”

“ Are you going to return to Lurgan to-night?”

“ Yes, ma'am, I am ; can I do anything for you, ma'am ? ”

“ If you would kindly take a note to my husband I should be so very much obliged.”

“ Faith, I will, ma'am, with the greatest pleasure ; I would do a weightier job than that for either himself or yourself.”

“ Thank you, Mr. McDonagh. I will write it in one moment while you make your purchases here.”

She hurried into the stationer's and wrote—

MY DARLING CHARLES,

I have had all success ; Mr. Griffin was very kind. He does not want the curacy for any one else. You are to see him to-morrow. Come

to your mother's by the early train, if you can. Bring your best clothes on you; your new hat is in my wardrobe. Do not forget your testimonials, and your brushes. Your own wife,

“ Eva.”

This wife-like epistle she gave McDonagh.

“ You will be sure to let him have it to-night; it is of great consequence,” she said.

“ Faith! he shall have it the very minute I get there, ma'am.”

Eva now proceeded to Johnstone's in Dawson-street. Taking an old waistcoat out of her carriage-bag she ordered one made by it of the coveted pattern, which was a little modification of the ascetic shape. It was to be high to the throat, but with buttons visible, and made of black cloth instead of Orleans, and was to be sent to Haddington-road early in the morning, with a couple of loose collars and a cravat or two. Then she went to her mother-in-law's. Old Ellen let her in. Mrs. Stanhope was out taking the air, and Eva sat down in the back drawing-room to wait her coming home. She did not remain seated long; as soon as she got rid of old Ellen, who persecuted her with inquiries for Charles, she got up and

paced the length of the two rooms with quick, uneven steps. The morning's work had agitated and excited her. There was an under current of harrowing recollections and painful associations alloying her elation at success. Now that the curacy lay in prospect before her, almost in possession, feelings that would not be repressed, objections that had not been admitted, while it was yet at a distance and only looked at as a desirable object of lucrative employment, rose up in stern reality and disenchanted it of all fictitious enhancement. The return to scenes of vanished happiness and shattered hopes, the estrangement of relatives once so dear—estrangement which she herself felt unwilling should be cancelled or lessened—the struggle which pride would have to undergo in living among them on straitened means, all these rose in undiminished magnitude before her. Then—for Eva's heart was brave if it could get anything to lean on—came the feeling of the superiority of her husband's intellect.

“If he can but get into notice, he knows more than every Clifton and Herbert put together,” she exclaimed aloud, and drying her tears she sat down again.

Charles ate a lonely dinner. When ten o'clock

came he walked down to the station, in some vague hope that Eva might have had some good reason for disobeying him and returning ; but he was disappointed ; no Eva came. He returned, the fire was nearly extinguished, the lamp burned dimly, the room looked dark and dreary. He never remembered to have felt so desolate and comfortless: he had seated himself sadly at his work when a tap came to the door.

“ Come in.” Mr. McDonagh entered. Thinking he came on business, Charles mildly asked him to sit down.

“ No, thank ye kindly, sir, I can’t stop ; my good woman has a bit of supper waiting for me. I saw your lady in town, and she gave me this note for you, and as she seemed anxious about it I just thought I would bring it to you without delay.”

“ Thank you, Mr. McDonagh, I am very much obliged to you.”

“ You’re very welcome, sir.” He shut the door.

Charles tore open the note, and read it with a brightening countenance. He sat down to his desk a happier man than he thought he could be in Eva’s absence.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN EXTRAVAGANT WIFE.

JOHNSTONE was punctual. The waistcoat arrived in due time next morning, and Eva, having duly admired it, was holding it at the drawing-room fire to air, when her husband came in. The first greeting over, she said—

“Come up and dress, Charles, dear, for fear Mr. Griffin should come: he named no hour, and may be here any time.”

“Dress! I have nothing to dress in; I have all my best clothes on: you told me to put them on.”

“Yes, dear; but you are dusty, and your shirt is soiled; come and wash.”

“I put on a clean shirt before I started. Unless I changed it in the railway carriage I could not have put on one since. What have you got there?”

“The waistcoat I have been so long about buy-

ing. It has come very opportune ; it is made high and will cover your tossed shirt. Come up and wash, love. You are dusty from travelling."

The waistcoat was tried on and fitted marvelously. The shirt collar now excited Eva's animadversions, it was so dirty and crumpled (Eva had added a sly crumple as she adjusted the waistcoat).

" If I could sew a button on the back I have a loose collar here," said she, producing one. She did not think it was necessary to tell that she had a clean shirt in the portmanteau, in case Charles should resist. But he could not well resist when she sat on his knee, and put her arms round his neck to pull down his head to see if the button sewing was practicable. The end of it was, she cut off the refractory collar bodily and buttoned the new one on.

" Now let me brush the back of your hair. Here is a clean cravat. You look very nice, Charles," said she, when he was dressed. " Do you know, I am beginning to feel very proud of you."

He put her quickly aside ; but no man is impervious to flattery : he felt pleased. Perhaps his glass told him he was a different looking being

to what he had been two months before: if it did not, it was a bad glass.

They descended to the drawing-room to wait for their visitors, who were long in coming. Time always seems long to those who wait. Eva recounted to Charles the adventures of the day before, only repressing all allusions to her English relations. She had just finished when a ring was heard at the front door. Old Ellen, dressed to order, opened it, and ushered in Mr. and Mrs. Griffin.

Eva's manner peculiarly shone in that species of conventional good breeding entitled "suavity:" she possessed a most happy knack of ingratiating herself into the good graces of those who came in contact with her, by an easy flow of natural politeness, in which no symptom of either exertion or affectation was apparent.

She rose to receive her visitors as if their presence gave her so much pleasure, as if no thought of interest or business was connected with them in her mind; introduced her husband as one who would be glad to make their acquaintance, and having placed every one on an easy and pleasant footing, with true womanly tact engaged Mrs. Griffin's attention on some subject purely

feminine, leaving the gentlemen to improve their acquaintance and pursue their own conversation.

The subject of the curacy was soon broached. Charles showed his testimonials—which he might well be proud of—and declared his principles and opinions. They seemed to satisfy Mr. Griffin very well. Old Ellen here entered with a tray of wine and cake; Eva knew what Mr. Griffin liked: he became loquacious as he sipped his sherry.

“A charming situation this,” said he, as he looked about, “so open and airy; one can hardly believe themselves in a city. Do you keep it as a town house, Mr. Stanhope?”

“I? No, sir. This is my mother’s house.”

“Oh! indeed! Well, I think I am rather glad you do not keep two houses. I don’t like too wealthy a curate. I hope Mr. Stanhope you are not open to that objection; not encumbered with too much of this world’s goods?”

Charles coloured. Eva, like a good wife, came to the rescue.

“No, Mr. Griffin,” said she laughing, “Charles’ encumbrances are not money bags.”

“I would say one of his encumbrances was a mine of wealth,” replied the rector, bowing in true

Chesterfield style. "No," he continued musingly as he filled his glass again, "I don't like a curate who is too wealthy to inhabit my humble parsonage. You know Hilton Parsonage, Mrs. Stanhope?"

"Oh, yes, well: it is a very pretty place."

"I am glad you think so. It will give me great pleasure to see you installed in it. I shall sometimes look in for a bit of luncheon when I ride into Hilton."

"No one will be more welcome," said Eva, with a most courteous smile at both him and Mrs. Griffin; Charles bowed acquiescence.

"I have done a good deal at that little parsonage at Hilton," pursued Mr. Griffin; "put it in thorough repair, papered and painted. I did it with the idea that Ernest Clifton would wish to inhabit it when he married; till then, he lived in lodgings, as you are aware (to Eva). I am happy to accommodate my curates when I can, and as I should have to do it some time, I thought I might as well choose an acceptable time. But, my dear sir, your predecessor married an heiress, and the heiress' guardian—as I dare say your wife will tell you—though a very estimable man, is not wholly exempt from a little love of the pomps

and vanities of this world. My parsonage and its improvements were disdained, and Weston Hall taken as a residence for the bride—a very suitable residence for a man of fortune. I have no fault to find with Ernest Clifton: I do believe he did his duty painstakingly and conscientiously; but it seems to me that when a poor parishioner wants ghostly comfort or counsel, he would venture to seek it at the unassuming porch of Hilton Parsonage, when he might be loath to pass through the gates of Weston Hall, and trouble two footmen in livery to open the door for him; so you see, my dear sir, I prefer a curate who is not too wealthy to live in my parsonage. Now: when can you enter on the ministry?"

"My present term of engagement will end next week. I could take the duty the Sunday after next, but it would hurry me greatly; if you could conveniently dispense with my services until the following Sunday I should be glad."

"Well, we shall see. I don't think I am without friends who would do a day's duty for me. Ernest Clifton would be bound to get it done, as his term is unexpired; but he is a neighbour's son, and I don't exact the pound of flesh from him. Then we will say the third Sunday from this.

The agreement shall be made out accordingly.
Are you staying in town, Stanhope?"

"Only until to-morrow."

"Well, I shall be here some weeks; this wife is making a Paddy of me. On your way over, you can call on me to sign, seal, and deliver. He rose and took his hat."

"Is there any care-taker in the parsonage that I could trouble to send me a few measurements," asked Eva; "I should like to take some few things with me from here."

"My agent, Mr. Locock, shall do anything of the kind you wish. Just write to him, and say it is by my desire. There are two sitting-rooms, three if you wish it, five good bed-rooms, offices, coach-house, and comfortable stable. You know, of course, Mr. Stanhope, that the extent of the parish will involve the keeping of a horse."

Charles started. To keep a horse was a luxury never yet had entered any corner of his mind. In no vision of the future had it ever formed a part. It was quite out of his way, that man of books! He had never been on a horse's back since he left the country at his father's death twenty-two years ago. He had some-

times, but very rarely—for his mind was too disciplined by the contemplation of things actual to give way to the ideal; still he had sometimes dreamed of wealthier days, and of a library well stocked with books; but a horse—no, a horse had never yet occupied a thought in his calculations of advancement. After a moment's hesitation, he said—

“I am a good walker, sir.”

“So you may be, and yet break down if you attempt to work Hilton parish on foot. Your predecessor was a good walker—none better—a trained man at Oxford, limbs double the weight of yours, and he could not do it. His pony got lame at one time, and in three months he was like a shadow himself: Mrs. Stanhope, your authority must come in here.”

“Yes, it shall, Mr. Griffin. I will promise Charles shall not walk himself to a shadow. He is thin enough even for the Bishop. If he will not keep a horse for himself he shall have mine, and I will learn to do without.”

“One horse between you would do very well, I dare say; take the lady her airing and carry the curate when he has to go distances, and the lady can do a little shopping meanwhile, and take

a stroll with a friend in the park: Lord Hilton's park is thrown open now for a promenade, a great boon to the town's people. Oh, yes! one horse can be made do very well."

Charles thought Eva had lost her senses; but not wishing to make her a public example, he held his peace for the present.

"Now, sir," continued Mr. Griffin, "my wife and I are going home; if you are not otherwise engaged, perhaps you would put on your hat and give us your company part of the way."

Charles complied, and the three started.

Eva did not lose one moment in commencing her preparations for their altered destiny. Her mother-in-law having just come in as Charles left with the Griffins, she carried her off to "Todd and Burns," to assist her in selecting drawing-room curtains and some other little luxuries of furniture, which she intended carrying with her to Lurgan, to make up during the fortnight she was still to remain there. That very night she wrote to Mr. Locock for information she required regarding the dimensions and arrangement of the rooms. Next morning she returned with her husband to Lurgan. It was not until they had arrived there that he

asked her what she had meant about the horse.

“I meant what Mr. Griffin said, love, that one would do between us.”

“But we shall not have one; could not keep one.”

“We must, dear; we could not do without,” said Eva, stoutly.

“You could better do without than have me in jail.”

“If you are in jail, Charles, I shall be there too: where you go I will follow; but I hope we shall both keep outside it. I have calculated very often, and I think we can do it; we shall have 200*l.* a year, in money, besides the house, garden, and field. I do not know, but I do not think the field is large or good enough to keep a cow, but it will help the keep of the horse: we can turn him out to eat the grass when he is not wanted. By not baking or churning at home, one woman servant will do us, and a man, who can be in and out, wait on us and take care of the horse and carriage.”

“Carriage!”

“Why, yes; what use should I have for a horse if I had not a carriage. A carriage is an

indispensable necessary there ; all the visiting is in the country : no one lives in the town. You could not pay a morning visit or go out to dine without a carriage : a fly looks so shabby."

"*Parvum parva decent,*" said the humble scholar, smiling.

"I know what that means, Charles, though you think I don't," replied his wife, with animation ; "it means something about my being small ; no need for me to look smaller than I can help. Besides being shabby, flies are very expensive, and one often stays at home rather than take one. We need not have a grand carriage ; yet, at all events, while we *are* so small," she added with a half unforgiving smile, "just a light phaeton for one horse, and we can go out whenever we like."

Charles said no more, but he inwardly determined not to allow the carriage. Notwithstanding his deference to his young wife's powers of management, he thought it a greater expense than he could venture to incur : and with this conviction and resolution he went back to his books and his parish.

Eva cut out and stitched away at the curtains.

A great deal of mental arithmetic was done over them, dividing the 100*l.*, and apportioning the divisions to the requirements of a family setting themselves up in the world. Many times had divisions to be sub-divided, requirements abridged, and calculations to be begun anew.

But it must not be supposed that life always wore Hope's rosy hue for Eva; that the clouds which had passed over her never returned, that her eye was always brightly looking forward, never sadly looking backward. True that her husband thought so: her lips ever wore a smile for him; her voice ever cheered and encouraged; yet often while he slept, the tears were rolling silently down the cheek that rested (he believed in happy forgetfulness) on his bosom.

The mother of the new curate of Lurgan died. He was obliged to attend her funeral, and could not take Charles' place at the time fixed. It deranged the Stanhopes' plans. They were to have gone to Haddington-road for their last week in Ireland, for the purpose of making purchases and arrangements incidental to their move. Eva wished to go alone: this Charles opposed, because he could not bear to part with her; his very flesh crept at the thoughts of the lodgings without

her. No book that ever was published could compensate for the loss of her smile, her parting kiss when he went out, her silvery welcome when he came in. She assured him her departure was an actual obligation: they should not have the common necessaries of life when they arrived at Hilton unless she went to provide them.

“Why not write and tell some of your relatives we are coming?” urged her husband. “Mr. Griffin seemed fully to expect we should stay with them until we could make ourselves a little comfortable; he spoke of some near him who he said were exceedingly fond of you.”

“I do not think they are likely to ask us; if they did, I would not go. We parted in unkindness.”

“How was that, Eva, dear?”

“They affronted me, and I resented it. It is an ungrateful subject; let us not talk of it.”

“But a moment, Eva, love. I would not pain you, dearest; but now that you are returning to their neighbourhood, would it not be better to forget old feuds and go with friendly feelings among them? to have them looking for your coming with pleasure instead of regret.”

“ You do not know them, Charles ; they will look for us with no pleasure : I dare say will be very angry at our coming at all. They are rich and proud, and want no relatives less rich among them. I can be as proud poor as they are rich ; I want nothing from them : no assistance, no countenance. I think with your position as resident clergyman of Hilton, and the way you will fill the office, and my own acquaintance in the county, we shall do quite as well independent of my relations as if they extended to us every morsel of patronage they possess.”

Eva’s lip curled bitterly as she spoke.

Charles once again recurred to the subject, but it seemed to cause his wife such evident pain, he relinquished his own wish and permitted her to precede him to Dublin. Assisted by her mother-in-law, Eva purchased busily, the large things first ; she said, trifles run away with money faster than any one can imagine. Mrs. Stanhope knew of a piano that had been bought a month before for forty-eight guineas ; the lady died, and it was now to be sold for twenty. This was bought. Nothing had been said about the carriage since the day Eva had so cleverly made

it out to be indispensable. Charles thought she had abandoned the idea, and said no more.

Eva took silence for consent. The two ladies went into Dycer's to speak to him about a horse. In the yard, at the very time, an auction was going on. An officer's phaeton and horse were being put up for sale: he had received a sudden order to join the service companies of his regiment, and they were to be sold for whatever they would fetch. It was an elegant-looking equipage, with the new improvements, a cab-head lined with blue cloth, a driving seat in front, and coloured lamps. It was standing in the yard, the horse harnessed to it. Eva knew nothing about a horse; it might have been spavined or have the glanders for aught she knew. Seeing a tall elderly looking gentleman leaning against a stable door looking on at the sale, she ventured up to him and said—

“Might I ask you to tell me, sir, whether that horse has any disease or bad defect?”

“Not that I know of, ma'am. He seems sound, has a good action—will go a dead bargain: I would buy him myself only the trap is tacked to him. Do you wish to bid, ma'am.”

“I should like,” said Eva.

“ Well, step in here,” (making room for her in the ring.)

The auctioneer run on. “ This superior turn-out going for twenty guineas—the phaeton alone worth double the money. Twenty-one guineas—in perfect order—patent axles, elliptic springs, moveable driving seat, German shutters—made to order not six months ago. Twenty-two guineas—a beautiful actioned horse, I may say given in the bargain. Twenty-three, that means one guinea for the horse, I suppose—Twenty-four, thank you, sir. Trots ten miles an hour—thin-coat, sound as a bell. Twenty-five—Twenty-six: thank you, ma’am. The ladies won’t let a beautiful article like this go for nothing; it would be the admiration of the park on a field day. The harness nearly new—Twenty-seven—the greatest sacrifice ever known. Can it be no one in Dublin has enough of money to buy a splendid equipage like this at quarter price? What are you about, gentlemen? For God’s sake some one buy it to make money on, they would double their money to-morrow. Twenty-eight. Will no one make a bid? Twenty-eight guineas only offered—Twenty-nine, the price of the phaeton not yet made up. Thirty—the ladies will shame you, gentlemen. Thirty

guineas only offered for a turn-out any gentleman might be proud to put his bride in. Dublin is not worth a rap or this equipage never would be let go for nothing! Thirty guineas—no advance after thirty guineas! It's your last chance—you'll never get such another. No use giving you chances—and at thirty guineas it is—gone.” Down went the hammer. “What name, ma'am?”

“Mrs. Stanhope.”

“Eva, my dear, you don't mean to say it has been knocked down to you?” exclaimed the elder Mrs. Stanhope rushing up to her. Eva surely did. “Whatever will you do with it?” asked Mrs. Stanhope, who had no notion when she went in that her daughter-in-law contemplated making a *bona fide* purchase.

“Take it with me to England: it was for that I bid for it.”

Mrs. Stanhope was thunderstruck. Keeping a carriage always appears a much more weighty matter to people living in large cities than to those who are accustomed to the country, where the facilities are greater and the expense less. The purchase was paid for; the auctioneer told Eva she had more than double the worth of her money.

“ Where shall it be sent, ma’am, or would you like to leave it here at livery ? ”

“ I think I must leave it here for a few days,” said Eva.

“ Perhaps, ma’am, if you are living in town you would wish it to take you home, just to see how you like your bargain. One of the men can drive you and bring back the carriage.”

“ Yes, do, Eva,” said Mrs. Stanhope, who had not had the chance of a drive for a long time.

They got in accordingly. Turning out of Stephen’s-green there was a stoppage in the crossing, a coal cart had broken down and impeded the progress. Eva’s driver drew up close to the pavé. Mr. Griffin was passing at the moment, and came up to speak to her.

“ A pretty carriage, a very pretty carriage,” he said, looking first at one side then the other, as he stood beside it. “ Your own, Mrs. Stanhope ? ”

“ Yes,” said Eva.

“ You will take it over with you, I suppose ? ”

“ I intend so at present.”

“ You are fortunate in a town house to have the necessary accommodation for keeping a carriage. Now, good a house as my father-in-law’s is, there is no coach-house.”

“ There is none at Haddington-road,” said Eva. “ This carriage is at livery at Dycer’s.”

“ Oh ! When do you purpose going over ? ”

“ On Thursday we sail. Mr. Stanhope hopes to see you on Wednesday : he has been unexpectedly detained at Lurgan.”

“ All right, so that he is at Hilton for the Sunday’s duty.”

“ Faith, Stanhope must be pretty well off to keep a carriage for his wife at Dycer’s,” was Mr. Griffin’s mental ejaculation as he moved on. Eva felt proud and pleased at having met him ; scores of times had she met Mr. Griffin when driving in far handsomer carriages and thought nothing about it. One feels so differently when a thing is one’s own. As to Mrs. Stanhope the first, though it was not her own, she felt as proud as Punch. Maternal pride no doubt.

There was an awful hiatus in the hundred pounds after these two purchases : Eva found many things down in her list must be abandoned. She bought pretty bright druggets

for the sitting-rooms, carpets being beyond her means. Some beautiful worsted work of her own she had made up into four fancy chairs of various shapes; cheap light frames were got for her water colours; some useful household requisites closed the list. Mrs. Stanhope added a present of a Davenport, a great object of Eva's ambition. She wrote every night to Charles telling him of her purchases. When he heard of the carriage he was very angry. Had she been there he could have found it in his heart to scold her well: at least he thought so when she was absent. Before he answered the letter he cooled: wisely reflecting that dissatisfaction could not undo what had been done, he forbore to make any allusion to his annoyance.

One unexpected gratification he experienced before leaving Lurgan. The inhabitants, who regretted parting with him, and who had often contrasted his worth with that of his rector, convened a meeting and subscribed 15*l.* for a little testimonial of their good will. With this money a very handsome time-piece had been purchased, which was presented to Charles with a complimentary address the day before his departure. The history of the address was funny

enough. The inhabitants of the town, all people in business, were none of them much of scholars, and finding the suitable arrangement of the address rather a difficult job, they came to Charles, who had often before assisted them in a scholastic dilemma, to write it. But this he declined, assuring them that a few expressions of kind feeling, and acknowledgment that he had done his duty to the best of his ability while among them, would be more grateful to him than the most happily turned compliments that ever were penned. This then they wanted him to write; but Charles would write nothing but the answer. So they had to concoct it between them. Charles felt pleased and flattered by the attention, for which he returned warm and earnest thanks. It was a subject of regret to him that Eva was not there to share his happiness. The rector and his wife were both very angry with the people for making such a fuss about a curate. It would be more graceful, they said, in the parishioners to have made some little offering of sympathy to them in their misfortune. To his grand friends Mr. Beresford tried to arrogate the compliment as much as possible to himself.

“ I am parting with my curate, and the people are giving some little present. Indeed, I have always found them very well disposed towards me and mine since I have been among them.”

Charles came up to town on Wednesday, arranged his affairs with Mr. Griffin, and on Thursday got his effects on board a steamer lying at the North Wall bound for Bristol. Mrs. Stanhope had engaged a woman servant for them in town, and Eva had written to her mother to hire a man she knew of, near Glenmore, who would answer her situation. Charles expostulated at the retinue; he tried to look cross, and told his wife she must not run into expense without his permission: she would find she was mistaken, and that he could be angry. She put her arms round his neck, and he found it was he who had made the mistake: he could not be angry with her, even if he ought.

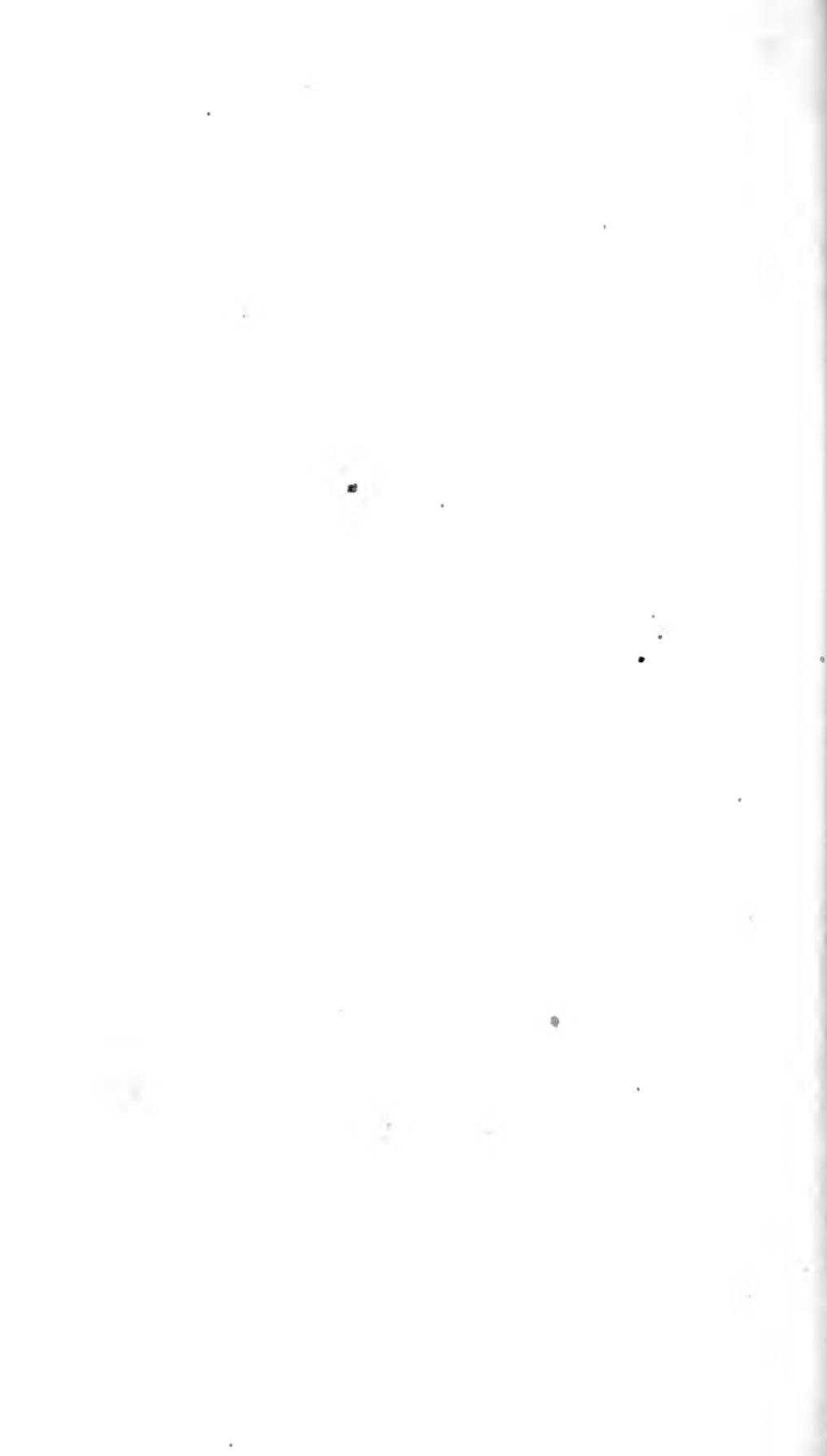
“ We should have a man, Charles, to take care of the horse on the voyage. This one comes to us for 7*l.* a-year and will put his hand to everything; when, perhaps, an Englishman would want 14*l.*, and lay down as many laws as to what was his business and what was not—what he would

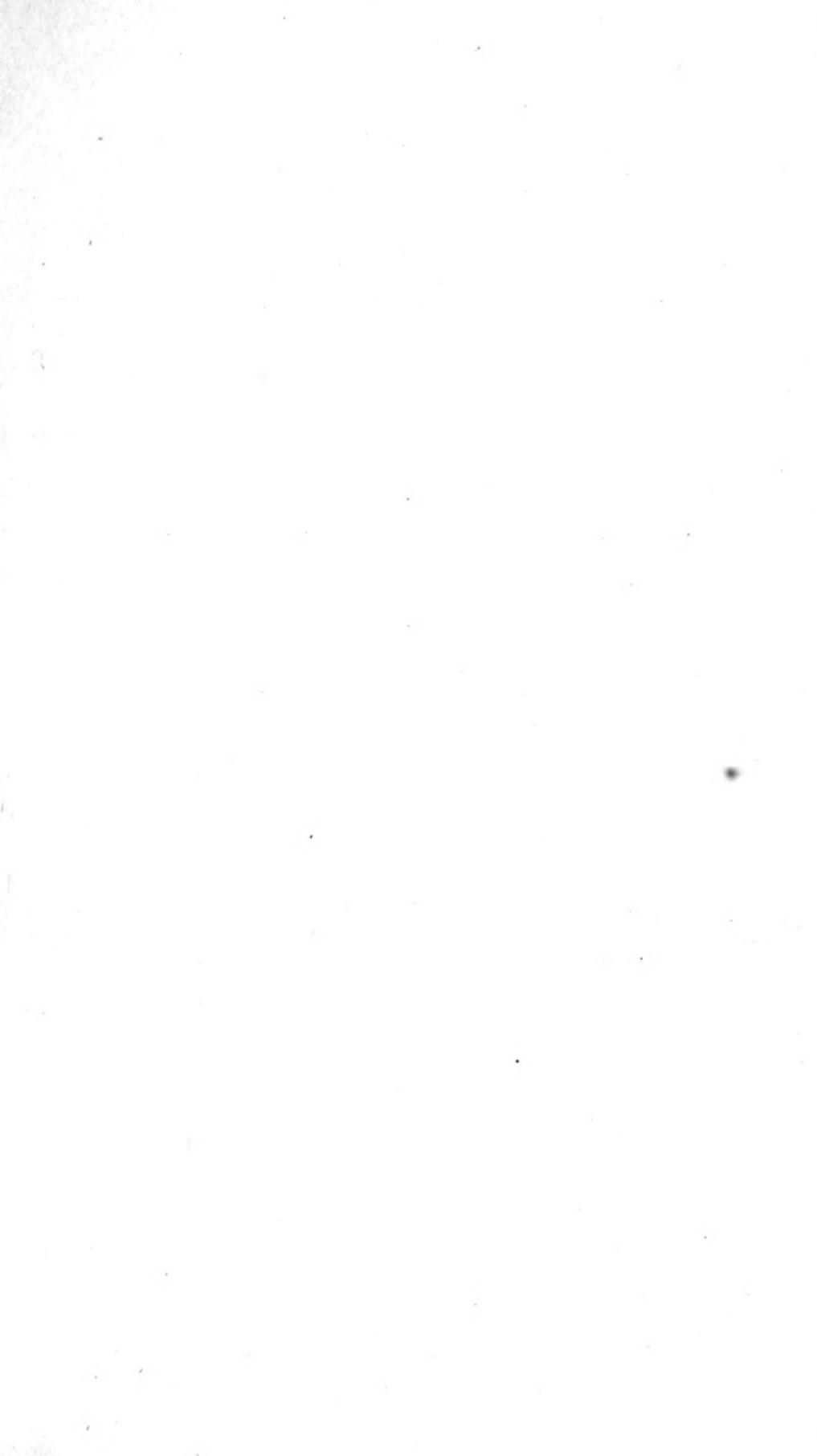
eat, and what he would not. I do not think I could manage English servants at all ; they seem to me to think they are of more consequence than their masters and mistresses. I know I never could get my dress hooked for dinner at Hislop because it was the hour for the servants' tea."

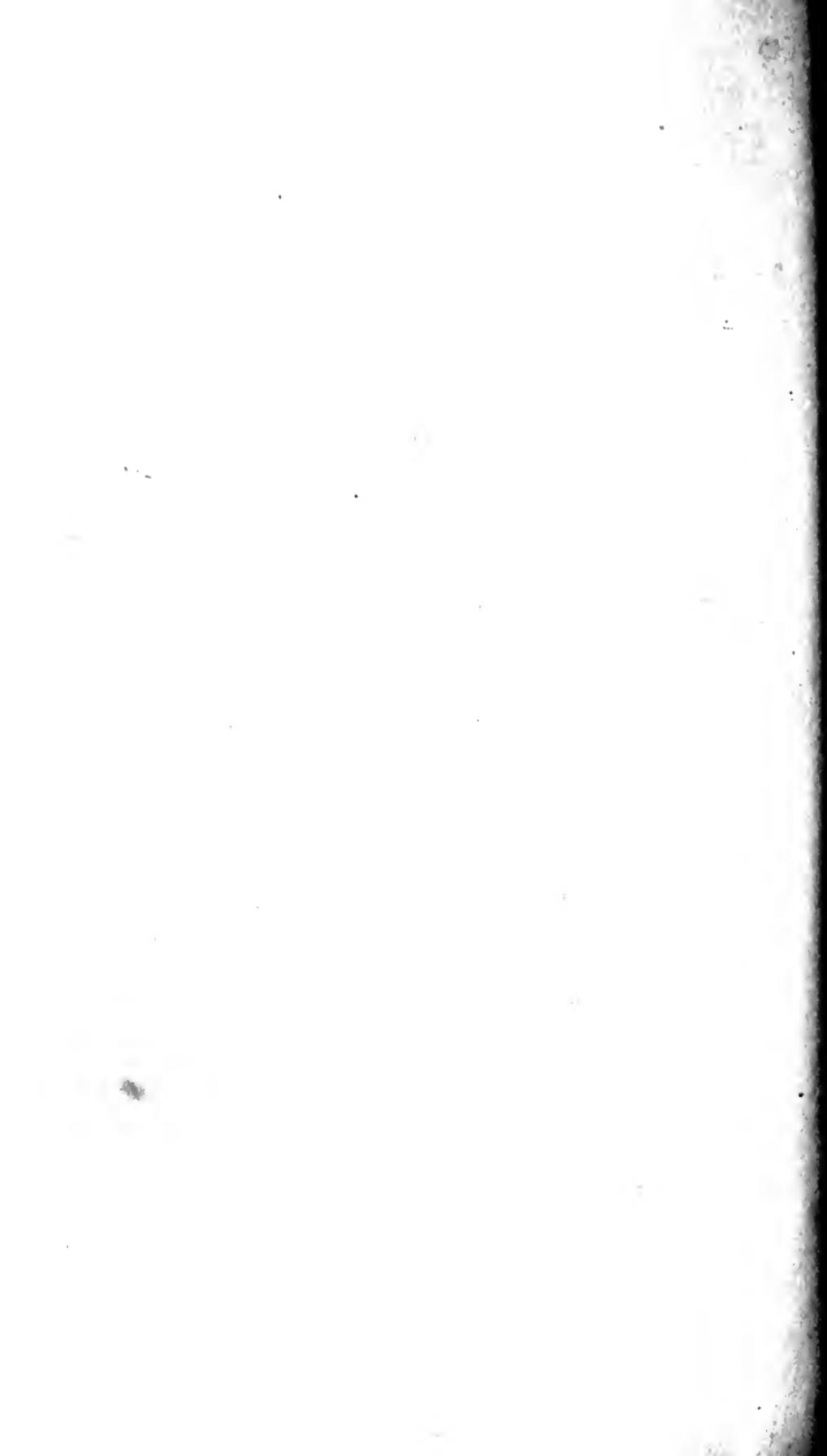
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